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ABSTRACT

Articles by four diverse educational innovators offer teachers some approaches to children's writing: (1) Eldonna L. Everttts advises that free self-expression should precede close attention to syntax and spelling; (2) James Britton, in four separate articles, points out: the intimate relationship between speech and children's processes of perception; the roles of planning, revision, audience, and function in writing; the concept of "the role of spectator" in the writing experience; and the need to reevaluate adult standards for children's writing; (3) Alvina Treut Burrows proposes ways in which poetic expression can be encouraged in children; and (4) Richard Lewis explores the world of a child, of feeling, and of creativity. Also included in this collection are a selected bibliography and a "Potpourri On Writing," the topics of which extend from comparisons of the British and American schools' treatment of writing, to teachers' assignments for children. (This document previously announced as ED 042 772.) (MF)

Explorations in Children's Writing

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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"Lightning," "At night when I go to bed," "Run little squirrel, run," "A Sword," and "The world is like a bakery shop window," from Alvina Treut Burrows, Doris C. Jackson and Dorothy O. Saunders, *They All Want to Write: Written English in the Elementary School.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., pp. 125, 136, 146-147. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Photo of ducks on the concluding pages of the book reproduced by permission of the owner, Wide World Photos.

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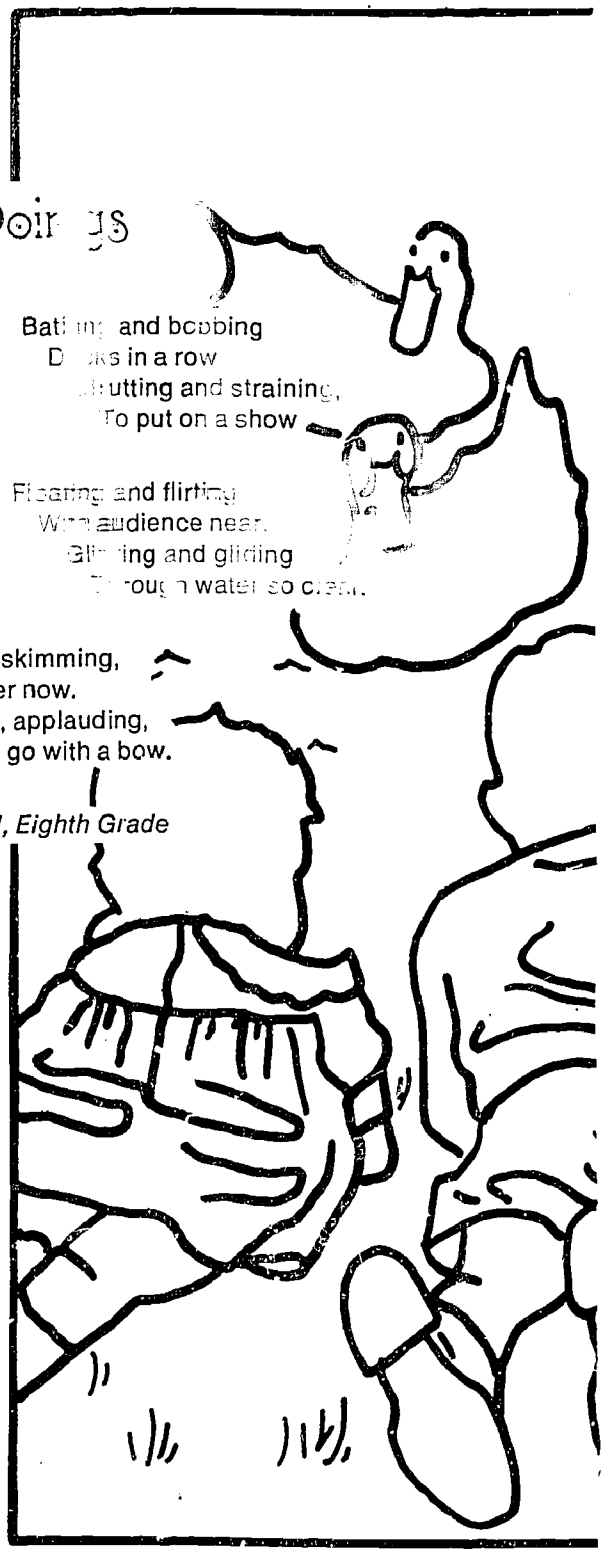
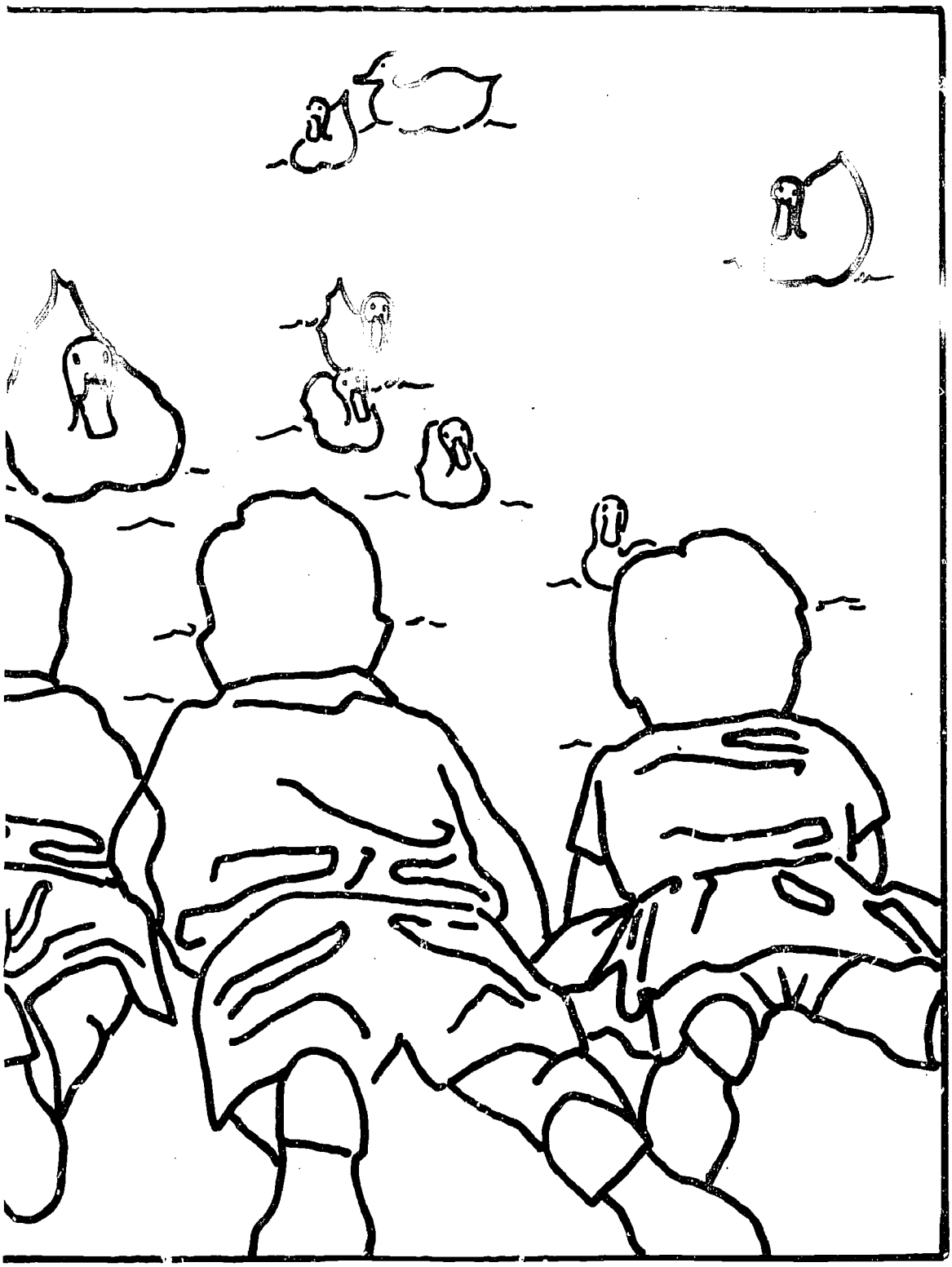
Cynthia Lord, Eighth Grade





Introduction

"To read a book is . . . like any other encounter with the world. All living consists in the generation of expectations, the modification of those expectations in the light of what actually happens, and the reformed expectat[illegible] the experience is ove

This comment by James Britton sums up what this book, to which he is a generous contributor, seeks to do on the subject of children's writing. Whether the reader is a teacher of children or of their future teachers, a supervisor, a parent, or a citizen interested in writing and its growth, he has expectations about how children's writing develops. These expectations should be modified and enlarged by what the writers of this book, with their varying points of view, have to say.

The papers collected here grew out of the 1968 Spring Institutes on Elementary English in Dallas, Texas, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where teachers discussed their experiences and their problems with children's writing and listened to the ideas of innovators in the field.

At the Institutes, as at the Dartmouth Seminar,* the emphasis was on talk—an informal flow of ideas and exchange of opinions—rather than on formal speeches from the platform. We have tried to hold onto the spontaneity of this talk by keeping this published record informal and by recasting the tape-recorded discussions only as much as seemed necessary to clarify them and reinforce their continuity for readers who did not attend the sessions.

In the thick of discussions, speakers modified or reaffirmed their positions. But one recurring assertion was that teachers should break out of habits of looking at children's writing only in terms of adult priorities and evaluating it only by adult models.

The first article, "Components of Writing," advises us not to feel compelled to urge close attention to syntax upon children before they have become used to expressing themselves on paper. Overstress on spelling, and even on the switch from manuscript to cursive writing, can be similarly inhibiting. The part that learning to think from cause to effect can play in expanding a child's potential for good writing is also discussed.

In "Talking and Writing," the first of his four articles, James Britton suggests that we broaden our conventional expectations about what speech does. It not only performs tasks, helping us exchange ideas, but also spins "a web of human relations." In addition, Britton points out, it serves an inner function as we use the categories it supplies to us in our efforts to make sense out of our world. He shows ways in which writing can be just as intimately involved as speech with children's processes of perceiving the world and shaping experience.

Britton's second article, "Progress in Writing," challenges the time-honored, formal processes of planning and revision which, in traditional classroom practice, have accompanied all writing, regardless of its purpose. He examines writing according to the resources employed in it, the audiences to whom it can be directed, and finally, its functions. He asks teachers to tolerate transitional stages in youthful writing, between the expressive and the expository, for instance. He advises against trying to hurry children out of one of these stages into the next.

The understandings a teacher should possess to guide the writing experience effectively are described in "Language and Experience." While this article is

* The Anglo-American Conference on the Teaching and Learning of English held at Dartmouth College in the summer of 1966, often referred to as the Dartmouth Seminar. —Ed.

more philosophical than Britton's others, it provides a rationale for much that was said at the Institutes. The theoretical and philosophical ideas he presents are illustrated by writings of children and youth.

Britton talks about the ways man's ability to represent experience symbolically helps him retain it for future use. He talks about how children build hierarchies of abstractions with which they can assess their worlds. Also, he discusses ways in which children—and adults as well—represent their worlds in language, not only to help them participate in action, but also to achieve pleasure and satisfy needs. The definition of literature Britton derives from this exploration may sound strange to the traditionalists' ears, but it could help adults hear resonances they have been missing in children's stories and poems.

In "Student Writing and Evaluation," Britton challenges adults to rethink their usual attitudes of ominiscience about the forms into which children should put their writing. Referring to poetry, he says teachers often judge it by standards inappropriate for adult poetry, not to mention children's. To get hung up on arranging prose in paragraphs, making verse rhyme and analyzing elements of children's sentences, he suggests, is to overlook the chief reason for having young children write at all. He offers persuasive arguments for delaying close attention to form until about the age of fourteen or fifteen.

Alvina Treut Burrows talks about poetic expression in young children and says it can be encouraged in a number of ways: by letting children dictate their thoughts to the teacher as well as write them, by experimenting with a relaxed form of *haiku*, and by sharing class members' writing for enjoyment, without correction or rewriting and without restraints on subject matter. She carefully distinguishes between personal, imaginative writing and public writing; the latter often needs to be revised and its mechanical errors corrected. Here, much more stress is given to practical writing needed in the classroom and to how skill in this area can be developed. Her examples of pupils' writing illustrate the themes she has identified as common to young children. Many elementary school teachers will find ideas in this section which they will readily endorse.

From the tape recording of Richard Lewis's talk, a number of short but thought-stirring excerpts have been drawn. Though these quotations do not do justice to Lewis's excellent presentation at the Institutes, any one of them could spark a discussion of an aspect of thought, of feeling, of creativity. Readers will appreciate knowing that a tape of his complete talk is available on request through the National Council of Teachers of English.

If while reading these four different points of view, you have found yourself saying, "Yes, but . . ." or "Perhaps, but what happens if . . .?" you may very

likely find your questions dealt with in the wide-ranging informal discussions that have been reproduced from tapes made during the Institutes and titled "Potpourri on Writing." The topics extend from comparisons of the ways British and American schools treat writing to the question of how to make assignments involving children's writing.

The careful reader will notice the calculated stances taken by some speakers and the competing goals occasionally stated. James Britton and Alvina Burrows are not in the same orbit, and one can infer from Lewis's excerpts that he has his own set of priorities for the process of helping children to be creative in classroom writing. While attempting to remain neutral, the director still showed her biases. Yet, as the dialogue continued, there was a convergence of thought on major issues.

The local chairmen who did much of the work of arranging the Institutes which led to this book were Carolyn Locke, Herman Benthul, Miriam Wilt, and Howard Blake. I would like to express my appreciation to them, as well as to the speakers whose ideas make up this book. My thanks also go to members of the staff of the National Council of Teachers of English for their help in preparation of the manuscript. Special recognition should be given to artist Norma Phillips Meyers, who designed the book, to Diane H. Allen for editorial assistance, and to Phyllis Godwin for the original typing of the tape recordings and further editorial assistance.

ELDONNA L. EVERTTS

ELDONNA L. EVERTTS, an associate professor of education at the University of Illinois, is also director of the 1969-1970 Institutes for State Supervisors of English and Reading, cosponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English and the University of Illinois under a grant from the U. S. Office of Education. A former assistant executive secretary of NCTE, she has done research on the learning of language and its relationship to reading and composition at the elementary school level. She has taught at Indiana University, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the University of Nebraska, where she also served as codirector of the Nebraska Curriculum Development Center. Her appointments under NDEA have included the directorship of the Elementary Section of two NDEA Institutes in English at the University of Nebraska. She took part in the 1966 Dartmouth Seminar.

Components of Writing

Recently one of my neighbors, a professor of architecture at my university, brought me some elementary papers he wanted to share with me. He had been invited into one of the elementary schools to talk about buildings and details of architecture that might be interesting to the children. After he had left, the teacher asked every pupil to write a thank-you note. Then she did something very wise. She said, "I will not select the best two or three papers and send them, but we'll send *all* the papers." He brought all the papers out to show me, utterly delighted with the unique ways in which individual boys and girls had expressed their appreciation. He didn't mind the misspelling or the awkward sentences, because he was aware that the children were writing what they really felt. These letters were really their writing, not the teacher's. It is important for all of us to recognize that children's own writing must not be compared with adult, literary, carefully-edited writing. Let's accept the child's writing as his product at his particular level of development.

I taught in a large city system at a time when we expected the arrival of a new art supervisor. Prior to her arrival, we tried diligently to get pupils to use correct form, but in our blindness we were trying to get what we thought was mature, dignified, acceptable art from our boys and girls. The art supervisor soon set us straight. She didn't want art work that looked as if adults had done it. She wanted art produced by children, a child's own art expression. We teachers were amazed. The art work would be too poor to display; it would not be suitable to take down to the administration building because it wouldn't be in perfect form. But this supervisor really knew children. She rejected the art that we teachers had dabbled in; we soon learned that the acceptable form was that of the child—what he had experienced and expressed. She insisted that teachers need not tell boys and girls what to put on paper nor should we even try to help

them. Since I had no ability in art, I was most willing to let the boys and girls go ahead on their own.

This philosophy applies equally well to other kinds of art, including composition or writing. Boys and girls should be permitted to write on their own. Their writing should be *their* expression. At times we adults can do our own writing and sharing of ideas, but let's permit boys and girls to write down their own ideas too. Certainly, we need to understand why children are writing, their purposes for writing, and to accept the writing as a record of what is happening to the child during this process. We tend to overemphasize evaluating the end product.

Each child has ideas from his own experiences to write about. The teacher can help him to organize them, and to express them through writing. We need not be too concerned, then, with sentence length, commas and complete sentences. We're going to work with the ideas of the child and discover his reactions and feelings instead. So then, before we can really assess composition (how to evaluate it or how to teach it), we need to know what the writer had in mind—his purpose, what he was trying to do, how he tried to organize and handle his ideas, how he regarded his efforts, his end product, and his anticipated audience. Only then can we really determine in a realistic way the value or importance of the writing process to the individual and the quality of the end product. How can teachers ever help students if they do not know how a paper was written in addition to reading it?

When evaluating student writing, we are often tempted to use research instruments even though they were not planned nor intended for such use. It seems scientific to place a grid over the papers to obtain an objective measure, as the researcher does, and then to think of the score or profile as a basis for grading. But this process is very artificial; it makes for abstraction and it doesn't measure the realness or the life of the paper. Recently I directed a research project on children's composition.[1] We studied the composition of 700 boys and girls in grades two to six over a three-year period using a syntactical method of analysis to notice the kinds of sentences that pupils were using. But this kind of analysis gave us only a description of groups. This device was clearly not one to use for evaluating individual compositions because too many of these cannot be analyzed with such an objective measure. As I mentioned, some measurement procedures may be excellent for research purposes but not for individual instruction in the classroom. This does not discount the value, however, which the classroom teacher might derive from the study of such research.

[1] Eldonna L. Everetts, *Syntactical Analysis of Children's Composition*, Nebraska Study of Syntax of Children's Writing, 1964-65, Vol. 1, 1967 (ERIC Document 013 814).

Although research has indicated increased sentence length represents greater maturity in writing, we must be careful about telling boys and girls, "Let's write a *better* sentence." Rather, we should say "Let's write a longer sentence," or "Let's combine shorter sentences." These are choices or options we can show pupils. Sometimes for the purpose of meaning or clarity a longer sentence may be more effective. At other times it can be much more effective to use a series of short sentences. One needs to examine the effect of one group of sentences, or the effect of another.

A third-grade teacher in Oregon attempting to show the boys and girls how to embed one sentence within another to make more interesting sentences was surprised at the response she received. One of the boys in the class responded, "You know, I don't want to write one long sentence. I want to write two or three. I have a different story that I want to tell."

Sometimes teachers try to show pupils how to develop sentences, show them how in an artificial way. Teachers need to focus much more upon allowing pupils to express their ideas or to tell a story. Later they may have to be shown how they might make a choice of writing sentences in different ways, but that comes at a more sophisticated level or at a time when a child is asking for additional help.

Boys and girls in one third-grade classroom in Nebraska put a mark in the upper corner of their papers, just an X, and that meant, "I've enjoyed writing this story and I'd like some suggestions on how I might improve it." This was a clue to the teacher for an individual conference. When a student wanted to talk about the paper, he recognized he might make it better. His story, he felt, needed a little bit more work to make it more polished.

Boys and girls seem quite aware of the audience for which they are writing. They often enjoy writing for their peer group, and not just for the teacher. The most obvious way of including peers in the audience for a child's writing is having him read his stories to his classmates.

One teacher complained to me that it took too much time for boys and girls to read their stories aloud. (Alvina Burrows refers to this approach as being a good technique because then pupils can read with intonation; they know what they intend to say, thus they can convey more meaning and gain a greater impact for their ideas.) This teacher said, "I just don't have time with the size class I have for this oral reading." Later she set up committees or groups with each selecting one paper to read to the rest of the class. Perhaps even this way of working together could be a real learning experience.

Another classroom shared compositions by placing them at just the height for boys and girls to read easily across the bulletin board at the back of the room.

When the pupils came in between classes and at noon, they would stop to read; often they went back to where they stopped reading, to read the rest of them. With this approach, teachers find they cannot take the papers off the bulletin board until everyone has read all the stories. In a situation like this, pupils begin noticing before long that some stories are easier to read than others. They begin to see what good spelling and punctuation mean. They can see a need for some of the skills. Thus real learning takes place. Pupils are writing because they have something worthwhile to say, something they want to share instead of merely a composition for the teacher to correct.

Boys and girls are well aware that there are various forms of writing—public forms and private ones. Some kinds of writing are too personal to be shared or to be put on display. Teachers need to recognize that fact. One teacher had a little box where boys and girls could put personal writing, meant only for the teacher. Sometimes pupils prefer to write letters without signature, to omit their names from papers. Devices such as this give them an outlet for the sort of writing they often feel a need to do, in addition to science reports and other expository writing, which they may be called on to revise.

Does writing bring satisfaction to the child? This is an important question. Besides the obvious medium of the school newspaper, there are other ways in which teachers can make it possible for pupils to have the satisfaction of seeing their writing in type. They may take dictation from children, even ones at an advanced level. These compositions can then be typed into the forms that the written language customarily takes. Many a student who is himself unable to write well has learned from his experience in reading, or from his experience in the classroom, that there is a written form of the language which has certain conventions. Although he has not mastered these yet, he does like to see his efforts in this form. Retyping a composition, then reading it to a pupil to see if you have conveyed his ideas correctly is a good technique. Incidentally, many teachers have found that letting the pupil see his ideas in written form is an ideal way of teaching some children to read.

Now what about motivation? But perhaps you have more than motivational devices in mind when you think of a productive writing period. In a sense, motivational devices can become quite contrived. A more natural motivation grows from a classroom environment where things are happening because the children are intensely interested. Then writing can be as natural a type of expression as painting, art, movement, drama. No need exists to promote writing; it becomes a vital activity. If boys and girls in the primary grades write more easily than those in grades four, five and six, we know something has happened to the environment we teachers have created for writing. For encouraging writing, not artificial moti-

vation, but the general climate the teacher creates within the classroom is important.

But the teacher is the greatest single influence in creating this condition, not the printed curriculum. Your views may differ about what is meant by curricula. Too often they are merely something written on paper. Until something happens in the classroom, no curriculum has much value, either negative or positive, because it exists in a state of limbo. The teacher makes the curriculum become real and true.

When a teacher creates or unobtrusively arranges a learning situation for writing, he must know what his goal is and create assignments that lead toward it. A good assignment helps boys and girls explore for themselves and react to a situation. We can help boys and girls sense situations. We can arrange times for creativity and imagination. But if we go so far as to suggest topics for children's writing, these should be topics for which children have some background. Assignment evaluation becomes important.

A young teacher once said, "I told the boys and girls one morning that on my way to school I had seen a black Cadillac driving along the road. Suddenly it stopped. A man quickly got out of the car, opened the trunk and took out a black box, throwing it over into the ditch among the bushes. Then he quickly drove away. Now write and tell me what was in that box. Why did the driver do that?" And then she said, "Oh, we have the most wonderful ideas." But I really wonder how this kind of assignment helps boys and girls explore for themselves.

By contrast, an experienced high school teacher in Milwaukee wanted her students to be able to write about the commonplace—to see, to observe, and to notice things carefully so that they could bring clarity, direction, exactness to their writing. So they talked about rain. They looked out the window and noticed the effects of rain. Between classes they had to walk to different buildings. She asked them to get the feel of rain against one's face, the feeling one has when the wind pulls an umbrella inside out, the feeling of being wet. They thought about what it felt like to step in the oozy mud and perhaps to get stuck in it. They could write, speaking from their experiences. They were off to creative, imaginative writing, and they were helped to observe the commonplace. For too long, we've been too concerned with trying to motivate students to write according to adult interests when we could begin with their own ideas and standards.

Now, what are we doing to help boys and girls think better so they can write better in our classrooms? We talk about clarity, yet are we giving our youngest children and our high school students the foundation on which principles of rhetoric can be based?

The term "rhetoric" is becoming popular and interest in it is increasing.

Certainly, we want boys and girls to think logically, and to write clearly in a vigorous way with precision and exactness. Yet this kind of writing cannot be approached in a formal way. If we do, the result will be only a veneer; thought will not be original. We need not tell boys and girls all about rhetoric, the art of persuasion, the theory of logical thinking and then say, "Here is a writing assignment." We need to exercise care in what we tell boys and girls about principles or theories of rhetoric; the form must not stand in the way of the expression of ideas. I rather suspect we would be building a foundation for sound reasoning as well as providing a rich present environment if we began in preschool years and talked more with children in terms of patterns of relationship—of cause and effect, association, and the importance of sequence—at the very moment they have a concrete experience. Understanding follows the talking; parents need not wait for understanding before talking to their children.

Let me give you several examples to show how we have really ignored critical thinking, imaginative thinking in our educational program. When *Freedom and Discipline in English* came out a few years ago, the program for the college bound was literature, language, and composition.[2] The development of this tripod has influenced a great deal of what has happened in the field of English. It gave a balance, it showed where literature fit, it showed the importance of language and composition fitting together. But little thought was given to the ability of students to think critically, analytically. It was assumed that boys and girls know how to do it. And yet how much in literature, the close reading of literature, implies the ability to think and to handle material? Writing, too, has a place for imaginative thinking, a place for metaphorical thinking, a place for logical thinking.

Recently the present NCTE Commission on the English Curriculum was preparing its first publication. An attempt was made to define English. No decision could be reached on what English is, nor what it involves. The commission then decided to focus upon the issues that were involved. The result was the publication of *Ends and Issues*, written between 1965 and 1966.[3] This pamphlet has influenced many other committees. Many issues are being explored. Yet even now, all too little attention is being given to thought development and the role vocabulary growth plays in this process.

The actual words the boys and girls use and their general understanding of vocabulary are important, and we are becoming more sensitive to this fact.

[2]Commission on English, *Freedom and Discipline in English* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1965).

[3]Commission on the English Curriculum, *Ends and Issues: 1965-1966* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1966).

Teachers who look too carefully at the structure of sentences and paragraphs have forgotten that *vocabulary* is essential for the expansion of thought. Having more words to choose from is like having more tools with which to work. It increases the child's precision of thought. In Wilmington, Delaware, for example, the teachers and the principals of the elementary schools have been helping the parents to focus on vocabulary within the home and within the child's experience. Many of the families in this area visit others during the summer. As parents drive along with their children, they can carry on conversations in the car, referring to the *silo* in the field, the names of animals. They can explain those things that the children are seeing, describe what is going on.

But too often when a child takes a trip with his parents, he has only a comic book to look at and try to read. He isn't increasing his vocabulary; he isn't gaining new ideas with which to work; he isn't led to explore the experiences he is currently encountering.

Susanne Langer writes in *Philosophical Sketches* that language is an extension of an individual's experience. If he is lacking a word to explain his ideas, he will use a metaphor; he will describe it as something else. Pupils are able to handle new ideas from the words that they know. Metaphors, then, are not just literary devices; they are ways of expanding thought, ways of thinking—something we can encourage children to do.

Care must be taken not to over-define words when one works with boys and girls. The ability to recognize and use words can come easily and naturally by exposure, and less frequently by direct teaching. In the classroom when we read literature to boys and girls, we don't always have to stop to explain every new word. Too frequently teachers of reading over-define words and spend too much effort on getting pupils to understand every word. As boys and girls have more experience with words, they often can figure out meanings for themselves. Thus they gradually increase their vocabularies.

Helga Sandburg, the daughter of Carl Sandburg, in a statement in *Horn Book*, told of her own children coming home from school with a badge indicating they belonged to a special "club" because they looked up all words they did not know in the dictionary.[4] And she wondered how artificial such teaching can be since she herself did not look up every new word she encountered in her own reading. Then she related an experience in Michigan on their farm. The good books were all carefully selected and placed in the library in their home. But the rejected books, the leftovers, were placed in the goat barn. And it was

[4]Helga Sandburg, "Skip It: An Open Letter to Children on Reading Books," *Horn Book* XL (1964) pp. 86-87.

there that she did her reading. She explained she sensed it was not wise to ask about many of the words she didn't know, so she just figured out their meanings as best she could. Some of the words she completely ignored; she wasn't interested in these. As she read more, she began noticing certain words that came up time and time again. She figured out the meaning from the sentences in which they occurred but never bothered to look them up. By broad experience with literature, by lots of reading, by using a variety of words in the classrooms, by using precise words at home for some of the activities that are going on, pupils can not only extend their reading vocabularies but also gain an understanding of words and how they can be used.

Pupils should be permitted to use in their writing the words they want to use and try out. Too often teachers insist that they write only the words that they can spell correctly, they even threaten to grade papers for spelling. You know what happens. The second graders, who are at the eraser stage, start to write. They may have wonderful ideas and they start writing but, oh, they don't know how to spell a word. So they erase it. They think for a minute and they go on to something else; they don't know how to spell that word. Before long they've erased a hole, or perhaps several of them. They can't go on; there they sit. They don't write anything. Thus teachers destroy creative writing when they begin to put the form, the spelling, in the way.

Some teachers ask boys and girls what words they think they want to use and then place them on the chalk board so the correct spelling will be available. With such lists of words the teacher structures the children's thinking. Rather, children must be permitted to organize their own thoughts, use their own expressions, and use whatever words they need.

I mentioned earlier the research that I was doing. One of the ways we obtained writing samples from boys and girls was to show them the films "A Hunter in the Forest" and "The Adventures of the Baby Fox." These two films were made in Sweden. The first is without any words at all and the second has very few words. It's a story that is told in rhyme. We simply told the boys and girls to write stories, any kind of story they wanted. While they were thinking, we would show a film. Sometimes they would get ideas from the film. Some children would write about their own ideas. And we did receive a wide variety of writing samples. Incidentally, some of the boys and girls, when shown the one in rhyme, without realizing it, responded by writing in verse. (We also discovered that when pupils wrote "The end," the composing process was over for them on that selection.)

Boys and girls often said, "Do we have to spell correctly?" When I would say, "No, I'll come around, though, and write on a sheet of paper any

words that you want to know how to spell," the pupils would give a sigh of relief and start to write.

Teachers may destroy writing in the early primary grades not only by overemphasizing spelling but in the process of the changeover from manuscript to cursive. Boys and girls will sometimes ask, "Should we write or print?" If teachers indicate they may use whichever one is easier for them, they are thrilled. Often they go back and use manuscript. But they may discover that they've forgotten how to use it. In other words, when they are learning the new cursive, the old skill isn't maintained. Just when they become automatic, efficient in one, teachers give them a new form with which to write. Just when they can write their ideas, they're given another tool to work with. Thus the composing process goes backward. Is the sort of handwriting the child uses of primary importance; or is the composing process important? Cursive writing can often be introduced more easily later. Many pupils learn it automatically. This then is another issue that does influence composition and one which cannot be totally ignored as we have inclined to do all too often.

I think that you will agree with me that the process of writing cannot exist in isolation apart from all the other activities the child experiences in the home, in the classroom, in the community. Although it is a solitary occupation, it builds on the experiences of life itself. The process of writing is vital, involving the individual; it withers if confined to curriculum guides. The individual who engages in writing enlarges his own creativity and imagination. He gains an awareness of his own feelings and emotions. He discovers his own uniqueness. A. B. Clegg has recorded one teacher as saying, "By sharing his experience with others it becomes more significant for all."[5]

[5]A. B. Clegg, *The Excitement of Writing*. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), pp. 57-58.

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The Student's Writing

This conference is about writing, yet we haven't asked you to write. In fact the conference will consist mainly of talking, which shows we place some value upon talk as a method of learning. What I want to do is to look at the way we use the spoken language, and to do this as a preliminary to looking at the way we use the written language. We need to think about talking if we are to think fruitfully about writing. I believe it is impossible to consider writing as something separated from the whole foundation of an individual's language ability, and I am quite sure that the foundations of an individual's language ability rest on activities at the spoken level.

The kind of talk that goes on, on a given occasion, depends upon the situation and the purpose of the talk. One purpose of talk is that of getting to know each other. In any group we find ourselves in, we have to talk in order that each of us may establish his identity, declare himself as different from other people. It is only as each member of the group does this that the group can begin to establish relationships between the declared identities. Every word we speak betrays something of our personalities. We normally speak what Edward Sapir called "expressive speech." The signals we give out are not only signals about what it is we want to say, but also signals about what kind of a person is saying it. Hannah Arendt, a very interesting philosopher writing in America, declares that the whole of human life is a web of human relations. I want to suggest that it is by talk above all that we spin that web of human relations—and any teacher who tries to outlaw talk in the classroom is trying to make of his students exiles—temporary exiles—from life.

But relations are not established once and for all. They change with every changing interaction, every changing configuration of people: they have to be continually modified and maintained. We are now in a traditional situation

which, if we were to inquire into it, would prove to be handed down to us from the medieval universities—a situation of one speaking and many silent. If you wanted to change this situation you would do so by changing the pattern of speech behavior. You might start by asking a question, which you might then develop: if I interrupted you, you might then interrupt me and you might in this way take over the role at the moment assigned to me. The situation would have been changed by a change in the respective speech behaviors. It is mainly in speech that we establish and modify our roles in relation to each other.

One of the best illustrations of this process I have read recently is to be found in Herbert Kohl's *Thirty-six Children*. Read the story of how he began to get to know that class of his. He gives you not only what was said, but also his own reactions to what was said, and you can feel the beginnings of the establishment of human relations in a situation which had barely allowed of any such relations with the teacher up to that time. I think we need to learn much more about how this process goes on and about the techniques of talk for establishing human relations. It is clear that there is a wide range of choices open to a speaker, choices above all in intonation pattern, by which he may modify his relations with his listeners.

I one day overheard a mother at a holiday breakfast table with her ten-year-old, who obviously had got out of bed with that sleepy, grumpy, early morning feeling. The tone in which Mum said to her, "Come on Mary, get your liver working," indicated one way of establishing today's relationship, a way that was likely, I thought, to make the day very much less of a holiday than it might otherwise have been. I am sure we are unaware of how our speech can be destructive of good relations as well as constructive. I like to think, on the other hand, of the mother who wakes her small child up in the morning, calling her from whatever distant country her dreams may have taken her to, calling her back to the everyday world; and in tones which go far towards establishing that day's human relations—that bit of the world in which the child is going to live that day.

Now some speech does no more than maintain relations. (When I say "does no more" I do not intend to underestimate the tremendous importance of this process by which we constantly remind ourselves that we are not alone in an alien world.) But most of the speech we are concerned with in school has other jobs to do as well—the exploring and sharing of ideas for example. There is in fact a "task area" in which speech has to operate. This does not, however, prevent it from operating also at the same time in the area of personal relations. As speech performs the tasks of learning and teaching it affects also the relations between members of the class and the teacher, members of the class and each

other. Even in this respect it is at the same time indirectly a means of getting things done, for the quality of what is done relies upon the quality of relations between those who are cooperating in doing it.

Let me quote a simple example of the way in which work in the task area interlocks with the maintaining of personal relations. I remember a sixth form lesson, a lesson with seventeen- or eighteen-year-olds in which we were discussing *Romeo and Juliet*, which is a play that young people can discuss very ably if they are confident in the group they find themselves in. One girl was moved to make a very innocent comment, an honest, trusting comment saying exactly what she felt about the immaturity and so on of Juliet. This was a contribution to the task area: she was saying something about the play. The way a boy in the class took up what she said and disagreed with it was also a straight contribution to the task area, but it was made in such a way as to reject the honest openness of the girl's contribution. It was, in fact, a negative contribution in the area of personal relations although a positive contribution in the task area.

We have noticed, then, two jobs for talk, that on the one hand of teaching and learning, exploring, exchanging ideas, the task area, and that on the other hand of building human relations. Both those are aspects of language as interaction, language, broadly speaking, as communication. I want to go on to consider a third function of talk which is not communicative. And I shall have to do this in a rather dispersed way: in other words, I shall begin on it, then return to it at a later stage.

This third non-communicative use of talk is what a Russian psychologist, L. S. Vygotsky, has labeled "speech for oneself." In this form of speech, even when we use other people as listeners, the effect is primarily one of making sense of the world for ourselves (turning the world into our apple).

When the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King was announced, talk began going on all over America, indeed all over the world—talk of a past event in order to interpret, come to terms with, deal with a traumatic experience. I literally believe that the quality of the linguistic ability of the individuals taking part in that talk all over America, all over the world, will materially affect the outcome of that event.

I think we can understand the nature of this use of language more clearly, however, if we begin by looking at young children and seeing the stages by which they acquire it. In a more general way, as we watch young children learning to speak, we can discover things about the functions for which we use speech ourselves as adults. We can certainly distinguish in an infant's behavior these first two roles of language that I have mentioned. We can see him establishing relationships in the family. Relationships have of course been established

by means other than words from birth onwards, but language enables the child to declare so much more of himself than he can declare simply by his behavior. With the emerging identity, and its declaration, comes increased participation in family affairs. (The family is his whole field of operations and therefore to participate more fully in family affairs means to him "getting on," growing up—means progress in a fundamental way.) We can also see language serving his curiosity, "getting things done." His curiosity looks out in all directions and may light upon anything. So far he has explored by touching, handling, tasting, smelling, and so on, but he now starts to use words as a means of exploring further. Taking this very literally, he is now able to find out by asking questions. But we have to go deeper than this to explain the whole process by which language serves a child's curiosity, assists him to find order in the "blooming, buzzing, confusion" of his world. This takes us back to "speech for oneself."

Young children begin to learn to speak by saying what has been said to them in the situations in which they have heard it. They begin, therefore, with the most outward forms of speech, saying what their parents have said to them. Very soon they will improve upon this by improvising in the same mode—improvising the kind of social interchange that goes on in the family. When they have done this for a year or more, there comes the time when they begin to use speech in a different way. The first sign of it is normally what we call the "running commentary," when they begin to talk to themselves about what they are actually engaged in doing. (Some people think that the presence of somebody else as a virtual audience is a help to the process; but certainly no real interchange is involved, no response is demanded.) The important point to note is that not only is this speaking *to* themselves, it is also speaking *for* themselves, for what they gain out of the process.

To understand what it is they gain, we must look back to an earlier stage of development—a familiar stage—the point at which they play "the naming game." Perhaps we ought to rechristen it "the touching and naming game" because that is how it functions. Here is the performance of one eighteen-month-old girl at breakfast: "Bun, butter, jelly, cakey, jam, cup of tea, milkey." What is important about this sort of behavior is that it indicates not simply that children know the names of some things (and delight in using them) but that they are arriving at an understanding that it is part of the order of things, that things have names (although they wouldn't phrase it in this way). This sets up, as it were, an expectation that everything will have a name once you have found it out, and so everything may be brought into the conversation in the end. In other words, men use language to *represent* the objects of the world. What the infant is doing at the early stage is to bring into existence the objects of the here and now.

There is another milestone at the age of about two-and-a-half or three, when a child begins to be able to use words for things that are not present. This, of course, is a tremendous step forward. He is able then to use words not as attributes of things, not alongside things, but *in place of* things. Thus, what was named yesterday but is not now in sight can be brought into the present to explain the present situation. This is the first symptom of an essential function of language, that of bringing the past to bear upon the present. When Jean Piaget, the Swiss psychologist, referred to the present, he called it "the manifold and irreducible present." It would take us a long time to explore all that is involved in this but I think we can see the beginning of it. In the present, everything is happening at the same time and we need to select and focus sharply if we are to make anything of it at all. If what we meet is utterly new and unfamiliar, we have no basis of selection, no criterion of relevance and irrelevance—and we can make nothing of it. In other words, it is only by bringing the past to bear that we can interpret the present. By placing the fresh experience in the context of what has happened to us before, we can hope to understand, appropriate, incorporate it. A two-and-a-half-year-old child met her first strawberries. She looked at them and said, "They are like cherries." She tasted them and said, "They are just like sweeties," just like candies. Then to sum it all up, "They are like red ladybirds." Three things named in her past experience were now brought to bear to explain the new in terms of the familiar.

We cannot bring the past to bear upon the present until we have learned to classify aspects of experience. As Jerome Bruner has pointed out, it is no use knowing that event A is followed by event B, because event A will never happen again. It is quite a different matter if you learn that an event of *type A* is followed by an event of *type B*. You can set up an expectation that will operate whenever an event of type A occurs again. So bringing the past to bear upon the present depends upon a classifying process. Of course, even dogs can classify experiences. A dog gets excited when you take the lead off the hook. We had a dog once who went a few stages further and used to get excited if you licked the stamps to put on a letter. He had classified events. He knew that an event of type A was likely to be followed by an event of type B. In other words it was not the licking of stamps that excited him, but what from past experience he had learnt to expect would follow from this type of event.

What language does, of course, is to increase a millionfold the number of categories we can employ, and this is a major distinction between the human animal and what Susanne Langer has termed "zoological animals." Language is in fact all human beings the primary means of classifying experiences. Bruner quotes a classic example of this in his *Study of Thinking*, when he says that

physicists tell us there are seven million distinguishable shades of color. That is to say, taking everything into account, the human eye can distinguish one experience from another in the color area seven million times. And yet we get through our normal color business of the day by using seven or eight simple short words. It is clear that in doing so we are using words which cover thousands of distinguishable phenomena, and if we didn't, heaven help us, we should never get through our business of the day even in terms of color alone. We must relate categories of experience and not the unique events.

We can see in the naming game the beginning of this process of classifying, and from time to time we may catch glimpses of early stages in its development. Thus one eighteen-month-old child: "Mummy's chair, daddy's chair, baby's chair" and "shoe, another shoe, two shoes." What happens at this stage is that a name becomes a filing pin upon which successive experiences of the objects are then filed, so that as a child learns new names, he is also sorting the objects of his world into categories.

The incentive for the earlier forms of speech is found in interaction with members of the family, and in the process of such interaction, or conversation, language begins its task of ordering experience. In addition, therefore, to the benefits of social communication there is cognitive development (and of course the two are intimately bound together). In the running commentary, however, children exploit the power of language to interpret experience independently of social interaction. It is as though conversation does not provide enough scope for the massive task of exploring the world through language to progress as rapidly as it needs to.

"Speech for oneself" introduces a mode of speaking that is functionally different from that of social interaction. At first both functions are carried out in the same kind of speech, but as time goes on the forms of speech become differentiated to reflect the two functions. Social talk becomes more and more complex, able to deal with more and more situations, able to adapt to varying audiences: speech for oneself—the running commentary—becomes abbreviated and it becomes individuated. Individuation and abbreviation are, of course, developments that would militate against success in social speech. "Individuation" means, "I use this word because it has a special meaning for me," no matter whether or not it means anything to anybody else. Abbreviation becomes desirable when I am talking to myself and I know very well what it is I am talking about; it may be very undesirable when I am trying to make my meaning clear to somebody else.

I remember one particular occasion when my own two daughters were small enough to be doing this sort of thing. The younger, aged two, kept up a constant babble of conversation about anything that took her eye, and mostly in the form

of questions. The other, at the age of four, was at the stage where she would make drawings of things that had happened to her two or three months earlier in her summer holiday—all about going swimming in the sea and going riding on a pony and so on—and she talked to herself all the while she was doing it. I didn't know as much about language then as I do now, because, as I tried to record what was being said, every now and then I just put down "muttering." If only I had tried harder to record that individuated and abbreviated speech! At the muttering stage speech is half way to silence, and that is what happens to it next; it becomes internalized as silent, inner speech.

Projecting the developmental changes we have observed, we can surmise that inner speech will become even more abbreviated and individuated so that our adult thinking will use not language, but post-language symbols: will employ in other words something we have derived from language, but which has got further and further from the forms of external language. Certainly there will enter into our thinking the perception of relationships that we first perceived through words, but which we can now perceive without the help of those words. What language has done for us to reduce confusion to order in infancy (and, of course, thereafter) continues to serve all our higher thought processes throughout our lives.

Language and post-language symbols remain essential instruments for the interpretation of experience. Even when we can interpret in silent reflection, without benefit of audible language and a listener, we still prefer to do a great deal of our interpretive work in talk with other people. The incentive to shape our experience in words is very frequently that of sharing it with somebody else. It certainly operated this way with the four-year-old girl who was being taken for a walk and had an encounter with one of these little yapping dogs who snapped at her heels. The dog was still in view up the road when she said, "Lots of people get frightened easily, don't they, especially children, because they haven't really had lots of things explained to them, have they? So they get frightened. Dogs and things get a bit sort of wild when they change their country and want to go back. That dog's a Scotty."

One more example: on this occasion two five-year-olds in a nursery school provided audience and incentive for each other. (My colleague Basil Bernstein happened to be listening too, or I should never have known.):

"I'm taller than you."
"I'm taller than you."
"My sister's taller than you."
"Your sister isn't you."
"No, everyone's theirself."

Even the simplest conversations can arrive at mature conclusions.

All that, it seems to me, forms a background to and a basis for writing, the working capital of the child when he comes to write. And the essential process of sorting experience goes on in the writing. Christine, aged nine, was asked in school one day to write about her family, and this is what she wrote:

> My brothers' names are called Bert and John. On Monday my brother Bert

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> Still I never got my tiddleywink.[1]

I am suggesting that you can feel in that simple account the rough shape of the experience, the kind of tug of war between the good little girl who cares about her brother and the very understandable little girl who cares about her tiddlywink. I am not suggesting that this writing gives evidence of the fact that she had perceived that shape; I am going further and suggesting that the writing itself constitutes the act of perceiving it. I am not able to prove that it was so in this instance, but I am quite certain this is one of the important purposes we achieve in our talking and our writing.

The written language is also used in school for the purpose of developing personal relations, though of course very much less directly than speech is used. The way children vary what they write is in accordance with the kind of person they have in mind in writing it. This will be further explained in the chapter on "Progress in Writing" when I describe a research project with which I have been associated in England.

As with talk, so when it comes to writing, children *learn* by writing. By learn I mean above all this process by which they shape their experience in order to make it available to themselves to learn from. Next it must be observed that, if they learn by writing, they also learn to write by writing. I know when it comes down to brass tacks, we have to qualify this assertion and make some exceptions, but we don't destroy the basic truth of it. They learn by writing and they learn to

[1] From James Britton, ed., *The Arts in Education* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., for the University of London Institute of Education, 1967), pp. 44-45. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

write by writing. In other words I am putting forward an operational point of view. There is a whole world of experience to be interpreted, and writing is a major means of interpreting it. Why therefore as teachers do we go around looking for practice jobs, dummy runs, rigged or stage-managed situations, when in fact the whole of what requires to be worked upon is there waiting to be worked upon? Every time a child succeeds in writing about something that has happened to him or something he has been thinking, two things are likely to have happened. First he has improved his chances of doing so the next time he tries; in other words, his piece of writing has given him practice. And secondly, he has interpreted, shaped, coped with, some bit of experience. Now those two things happen, but I think our emphasis in the course of years has changed. It used to be upon the first of these. We gave the student a writing task to do in order that the practice should make him better at writing something else in the future. Now, we give him the opportunity to write above all because this encourages him to cope with something that is an immediate concern, an immediate problem to him: he is dealing with a part of the *now* for himself and we put the stress upon that, at the same time admitting that he will learn to write by writing.

Again, thinking of a curriculum, it is what is achieved in writing, this growing area of experience coped with, that builds up, if anything can, into a program.

So writing and talking and doing must go on in close relationship, and talking and doing provide the essential foundation. In talk about the here and now, and in bringing the past to bear upon the here and how, language is growing its roots in first hand experience. We need to use it throughout our lives to handle a great deal of secondary experience, other people's experience put into words: unless our language has its roots in first hand experience, we shall be unable to get to the truth of those second hand experiences. Moreover the spoken language remains the "recruiting area" for further linguistic resources. If you come to an unfamiliar area of experience about which you want to write—a problem, an unprecedented event—then the chances are you will talk before you write. In other words, even as mature users of language we go to talk as a first stage when a task achieves more than a certain degree of difficulty. In practical terms, then, all that the children write, your response to what they write, their response to each other, all this takes place afloat upon a sea of talk. Talk is what provides the links between you and them and what they have written, between what they have written and each other.

Let me illustrate the central point I want to put before you by referring to something we did with our own students in London this year. They come to us from a wide range of different universities where they have spent three years taking a degree in English. And we have one very short year in which to help them

turn themselves into English teachers. We started the very first session this year by having a display of all kinds of work written by last year's students, written by ourselves, written by children that last year's students had taught. We had tape recordings and records of folk songs going on at the same time while they walked around the room. To most of them it was something of a shock. For three years English has been their concern often in a very specialist way and they have a feeling that what they have acquired constitutes their stock in trade, and all they need to find out about in this year is how to dispense the merchandise. To see this mass of material which had no smack of literary criticism, literary scholarship, or even, at first glance, literature, was quite difficult to take. I was delighted when one girl turned away and as she left said, "I see what you are doing, you are turning the child's language on his own world." And that is the course in a nutshell. Turning the child's language on his own world: taking an operational view of writing: the whole world of a child's experience is there to be coped with.

I ought not to leave this topic without a word or two on the differences between talking and writing. That there are formal or stylistic differences is familiar enough to all of us. Let me merely illustrate the point by reading a sentence from a letter that Dr. Johnson wrote back from the Hebrides when he was on a holiday there. In his letter he was using, I think you would agree, what is very close to the spoken language. "When I was taken upstairs a dirty fellow bounced out of the bed on which one of us was to lie." He was complaining, of course, about lodging house conditions in those days in Scotland. Later, when he published *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland,* he included this version of the incident: "Out of one of the couches on which we were to repose, there started up at our entrance a man black as a cyclops from the forge." Well, you pays your money and you takes your choice!

But it seems to me that the differences that exist between the *process* of speaking and the *process* of writing are more relevant to our concerns here. And the most important of these lies in the fact that writing allows time for premeditation; there is a gap between the forging of the utterance and its reception. Because of this premeditation, because we can work on the writing until we are satisfied with it, I think the shaping process in writing is a sharper one than it is in talking.

What is important, therefore, at the elementary school stage is that children should write about *what matters to them.* But also, because they are at the same time forging human relations, and by analogy with what we find in the home where infants so successfully learn to talk in an atmosphere of generous encouragement, we must add this proviso: that in their writing at the elementary school stage children should write about what matters to them to *someone* who matters.

I will finish by giving one example of the shaping of experience in writing. This was done by a girl on the last day of her fourteenth year. She was going to be fifteen the next day, and somebody said to her, "You won't be fourteen tomorrow. You ought to write down what it's like to be fourteen." She said, "Oh, I can't, there's too much of me." However, she did and this is a part of what she wrote.

> Fourteen is an age in which one decides to become civilized and the ancient, beautiful, secret, Pictish things have to be given up in favor of a more sociable, sophisticated world where friends, people, and laughing are all important.* It's a change from the outdoor world to the indoor. I can remember moments of such wonderfulness at the top of the sycamore and elm trees that I don't want to climb them again. I can't go back. I don't want to spoil the seriousness and the feeling that I'm not a modern girl but something that fits in completely with the wind and the crisp smell of the air and the pattern of the leaves against the sun. I wouldn't be able to feel that again. There's only one thing that still works and this is lighting a fire in the garden in the evening, preferably twilight. Sunset used to be almost enchanted when I was nine or ten, now there's always part of me holding back and laughing at it.
>
> When I was younger I could afford to be, and was, lonely. Now people and friends, and people such as teachers with whom there is an unnatural sort of relationship, are much more interesting and vital. You have to learn to put up with one person's obstinacy another's silliness, etc., and still like them, and also decide what sort of image of yourself you are going to project. I used to hope that I would find some environment in which I would not have to cover some parts of me up, but I now think that the only one is my Pict state when I am alone and even that was influenced by what book I had just been reading. I know exactly where I am at home, at school, which are the biggest divisions, and at guides and so on. School is ten per cent learning, and ninety per cent being part of the intricate, rarely mentioned and yet completely understood hierarchy which determines who is whose partner, who sits next to who, etc. This is constantly changing and everyone follows the changes with interest, but otherwise it is like a flexible caste system.
>
> At the moment the set of friends I have at school is the principal one for which almost everything is sacrificed, so although I would like a boyfriend for his own sake, it would also mean that I would be looked on differently at school—mainly, but not altogether favorably. We laugh at boy-mad girls, but approve of boy-conscious ones, which you can always tell by looking at. It scares me to think that while now a boyfriend would be an asset for the kind of girl I am trying to make people think I am and want to be, in two year's time it will be a

*I ought to explain that in England the Picts and the Scots used to come raiding over the border and all kinds of things went on beyond the wall. The Pictish has come to have a sort of magical, mysterious aura to it.

necessity. I don't want to join the elite who band together to take refuge in the "waste of time and daft" line, although they have just as much self respect and they last quite a long time. I don't know, because I don't think I am that sort of girl.

I am sorry this is all about school, but for the moment that's how it works out. Soon I shall have to have a lot more friends of both sexes outside school which will be horrible to start off, because I am still shy, but I am growing up at a frighteningly fast rate and I want above all to enjoy myself while I am still a teenager.

Progress in Writing

As teachers we tend to think of writing in terms of the material we handle, the product. I want instead to consider briefly the process of writing. Thinking of writing as a process, the first thing we can say about it is that it is a lonely job. When we write we must to some extent declare and reveal ourselves, and we do so to an unseen listener. The closer the relationship we have with someone and the more actively we call up that relationship to imagine him as the receiver of what we give, the more easily shall we be able to undertake this lonely task. A child who sits over the blank sheet of paper must often feel that he has to push the boat out from the shore on his own and sink or swim.

The second point I want to make about writing is the element of premeditation. It is the gap between the generating of the utterance and its reception, its delivery to some reader, that marks the main difference of writing from speaking. I think this premeditation, this gap, may be used for two purposes, planning and revision; and I want to say a word or two about those two processes.

Planning: It does not seem to me that as we write we actually scan ahead to make deliberate linguistic choices: I think we do scan ahead, but it is to make choices among non-linguistic phenomena—among objects, ideas not yet in words, relationships perceived or half perceived that we want to pursue. The process in my view is best thought of as keeping the eye on the object, on the one hand, and keeping the language flow going on the other. What is written takes its own shape as we write. The best writing certainly has an organic shape which is a part of the meaning the writer communicates. In other words, the shape expresses, and arises from, the movement of the thought. Therefore, I believe in something I call "shaping at the point of utterance." I am encouraged to believe in that, incredible though it may sound, by thinking back to how in fact we learn language; how we have used the spoken language habitually throughout the day from infancy on-

wards. We improvise, we push the boat out, we do not wait to know what we're going to say before we start saying it. Speech is an intimate part of our day to day behavior. Language and events, language and people, language and things come to us, in habitual behavior, inseparably together. For, as Edward Sapir points out, language "is learned early and piecemeal, in constant association with the colour and the requirements of actual contexts."[1] In other words we are accustomed from early uses of language to shaping at the point of utterance. To abandon that process when it comes to writing and try to shape the utterance ahead in any sharp way seems to me to reflect a misunderstanding of the way language works.

As part of a research project we completed in London recently, for a year we set monthly writing tasks to 500 sixteen-year-old boys and girls. The tasks were different, and aimed at producing a distinguishable kind of writing. For one of these, we wanted to give the writers' imaginations as free a rein as possible. As a stimulus that would, we hoped, be both powerful and yet open-ended, we printed two- or three-line extracts from a number of poems. We asked the students to read through the extracts, pick one of them they fancied and write anything they liked about it. And then we added the sentence, "There's no need to work out what you are going to say before you begin to write." Some of the teachers in the schools who were cooperating with us thought this was really going a bit far. But in fact, when at the end of the year we shuffled the scripts of the ten pieces of writing together and had them independently marked by nine judges, the best average performance across all ten tasks was that of the writing on the poetry extracts, the task in which we had given this particular instruction.

When I write, the premeditation that I am most conscious of is that of finding a way in, getting a starting point. And after that, practically speaking, all I do in the way of planning—and I've spoken to a good many people who would agree with me—all I do in the way of planning is to use the margin of my rough draft to note down something which I know I want to bring in later, if I don't yet know where I want it to come in. If I sat down and planned my article ahead, I would not be able to keep the plan, and I always suspect that were I to plan it and stick to the plan, the final shape of the thing would be less well adapted to what I wanted to say than the shape that comes out if I leave it to the point of utterance.

Of course, there are some exceptions. If you have a long article to write, on a fairly familiar subject, something you have thought about a great deal and know your way around, and you want to make sure that these already foreseen points are given in logical order, then there will be some point in planning ahead. Even

[1] Edward Sapir, *Culture, Language and Personality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), p. 10.

so, I would keep the planning to a minimum, to the skeleton. I have a nice example of a letter written by a thirteen-year-old girl to her ex-English-teacher about her new teacher who was getting them to plan all their essays before they wrote them. She says: "How does he expect us to do this? We plan it once, and then we write it, and that's planning it again."

Revision: Premeditation may also be used for the purpose of revision. We have tried the experiment of taking two pieces of paper with a carbon between them and a washed-out ballpoint pen and then writing in a situation in which we can't see what we have written. (You can, of course, take the typewriter and turn the ribbon to stencil and do it that way, although you may find the ink still comes off enough to cheat.) This way of frustrating the premeditation does make a material difference. In fact the process of writing as we normally practice it seems to be a kind of switchback. We continually read back to what we have just written, and so get into the channel again in order to go forward and write the next piece. This seems to be part revision, part planning, at a level of fine detail. Perhaps this constitutes the primary way in which writing differs from speaking, the primary way in which we use the premeditation that enters into writing. I am not saying that there is not room for editing, going back to make what are usually minor amendments and corrections, and I am sure children should be encouraged to "view" their own work in this way. But I believe we can place too much importance upon this part of the writing process. You may know the story of Samuel Rogers. Samuel Rogers was an English poet who was the last of the Augustans and lived far too long, so long that he was a contemporary of Wordsworth's. At the time he was a very successful poet when Wordsworth was hardly recognized as a poet at all. It is said that, when Samuel Rogers was a very old man working on the revision of his long poem, "Italy," in heroic couplets, he spent all morning one day upstairs working; and when he went down to lunch, somebody said, "Have you had a good morning?" "Oh, yes," said Rogers, "I've been busy." "What have you done?" "I moved a comma from the middle of a line to the end of it." "Is that all you've done!" "Oh no, I moved it back again."

I should like to refer to one other aspect of the process of writing, the timing of it. As has been said several times here already, an injunction, "Now we will all write," is not the ideal way of timing the writing process. In John Dixon's *Growth through English*, there is a little piece of writing about a kitten and a lorry. That was a piece that I had from a teacher some years ago, and she told me the story of how it happened. Her classroom was so organized that, when they arrived in the morning, the children could get on with whatever they wanted to do. On this particular morning one girl, as soon as she arrived, found an easel with a lot of

large sheets of paper on it, and drew a series of about eight or ten pictures. Under each picture she wrote a caption and what you have in *Growth through English* is the teacher's copying down of those captions, put together to make a story. And the story indicates how this child dealt with the disturbing experience of seeing a kitten run over by a lorry as she came to school. That was not something that she could have done if she had had to get on with whatever the class was doing, and then a couple of days later been told, "Now we'll all write."

> The sun is waving goodbye to you all.
>
> Copyrighted material removed due to Copyright restriction
>
> And that is the end of my story about the kitten.[2]

Most writing of value and importance to the writer, unlike the example I have just referred to, probably requires a preliminary period of "incubation" and I think we should allow for this in setting assignments. If we ask children to write on demand, I think we are probably reaping what other people (or experiences) have sown.

In our research project in England, we are looking for differences between kinds of writing children do. Our first suggestion for classification deals with the resources of writing. It seems likely we could classify writing on one dimension by a series of Chinese boxes, each category containing what went before. The first category, the earliest, will certainly be "written down speech." That is to say, the linguistic resources of the writing will be the resources gathered in the course of

[2]From John Dixon, *Growth through English* (Oxford University Press for the National Association for the Teaching of English, 1967), pp. 26-27. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

speech. And perhaps the earliest form of this will be written down dialogue, to be followed at the next level by written down monologue. I think this needs explaining.

We have suggested that children learn to speak by listening to conversation and beginning to speak in conversational terms, and discussed how they then learn to use this social speech for another purpose (what has been called "speech for oneself"). Speech of a social kind is, of course, dialogue: speech for oneself is, in its typical form, monologue. I think we have enough evidence to feel that written down dialogue is the earliest (extended) form of writing that some children do and that it tends to be a cul-de-sac.

This piece written by a ten-year-old illustrates the point, I think, dramatically. It is an account of a day's outing with the family.

> "Oh, Mummy, do you think it will be all right to go and watch Daddy?"
> "Well, I shall want some shopping. It will be closing day tomorrow."
> "All right, I will go for you. But do you think he will come?"
> "This afternoon Daddy will not be fishing then, will he?"
> "No. Oh, HERE comes Robin."
> "Mummy, can he do the shopping."
> "Yes, Dear. He can do the shopping if you get the things we'll need. We shall want the rugs, saddles, spades, buckets, and the dog's leash. If you'll go and do that, I'll get some sandwiches and cakes for tea on the beach. Goodness, it is twelve o'clock and I must get dinner. Daddy will be home soon and I haven't got any dinner for him. We can have some eggs and chips."
> "Robin, Robin."
> "Yes, Mum," said Robin.
> "Go and get some chips."
> "Can I take Choker? He'll go mad." He was their puppy; he was brown and had patches of white.

Everything except that last half statement there had to be carried on the shoulders of dialogue, and what a cumbersome way it proves to be of trying to tell the story of a day on the beach. The monologue, the running commentary is, I believe, a really crucial stage in children's linguistic development. If you are in touch with any three-, four- or five-year-olds, watch for it and encourage it. (James Moffett did some work on writing at Harvard, and has suggested that a good way of getting elementary school children started on writing might be to get them to write running commentary, to say what is *now going on.*)

After the written down monologue, reading experience begins to affect writing and here of course the nature of the child's reading "input" is highly important. The first written influence is likely to be that of children's poems and

stories. (Very young children who have not started reading or writing at all, but get their parents or their teachers to write down the stories they tell will reflect some of the forms of the written language that has been read to them. Obviously "once upon a time" is not part of the spoken language; nor is "for" in the expression "for he had nowhere else to go," which I found in the story written down by a mother of a very young child.) No doubt this early influence of the written language of stories and poems is in general derived partly from things heard read rather than read.

It is difficult to make generalizations about the next stages: we may discover some general trends but the picture looks pretty haphazard at the moment. All kinds of individual written models seem to operate. For instance in England we have the Enid Blyton model. Enid Blyton writes cozy little family stories that any child of eight or nine can well imitate—and many of them do. (If they are still doing it at eleven, as this boy was, it is becoming serious! "May we help you with anything?" said Peter and I. "Certainly," said uncle, "Would you like to feed the chickens?" "Yes, please," we chorused. "Here is the chicken food," said uncle. "You greedy birds!" said Peter.) Later on at fourteen or fifteen, Dylan Thomas begins to attract imitators, particularly his prose, from his broadcast commentaries. It may not be very good Dylan Thomas that they write, but it all feeds into the stream. They are extending their writing resources by temporarily taking over somebody else's, and in due course they begin to use some of these resources, not for Dylan Thomas's purposes but for their own.

But the effect of reading upon writing is not usually the result of deliberate imitation. As in their speech, children "absorb" a knowledge of the grammatical system of the English language without ever having made that language explicit, so they take in the same kind of awareness of the way the written language works. As the influence of the written language increases, their progress in writing depends more and more on the nature of the reading input. I think we have in this country a crucial task ahead of us. Consider on the one hand the range of writing tasks for which children need to prepare, and on the other hand the very limited resources available to them as input—as for example in their scientific or geographical or historical studies. If your situation is at all like ours at home the models of such writing to be found in school textbooks are very far from adequate.

Now to the second act of categories. These are not in the form of Chinese boxes, but of a set of pigeonholes: every piece of writing will, we hope, find its right place in one of the pigeonholes in the set. We call this set the "**sense of audience**" category. There are four main categories: self as audience, teacher as audience, a known audience, wider than the teacher, and an unknown audience. But these four are subdivided so that we operate in fact with nine categories.

We have collected writings by children of 11 to 18 years, in all subjects from schools all over England and Wales—2,200 scripts from about 65 schools. We are still in the process of allocating these to "sense of audience" categories and the figures shown in the accompanying table are therefore very tentative, the results of a partial, experimental analysis.

Classification of Student Writings (Scripts) by Classroom Subjects According to "Sense of Audience" Categories

	Percentage of Scripts Subjects					
Category	*English* (536 scripts)	*History* (183 scripts)	*Geography* (131 scripts)	*Science* (214 scripts)	*Religious Education* (94 scripts)	*Foreign Languages* (47 scripts)
1. Self as audience	0.3	1.7				
2. Child to trusted adult	5.7				3.2	
3a. Pupil to teacher (general)	49.6	12.7	13.3	10.3	45.5	23.6
3b. Pupil to specialist teacher	3.6	2.3		1.3	2.8	3.3
4. Pupil to examiner	23.4	73.8	80.6	81.8	34.7	57.7
5. Expert to layman	0.7			0.5		
6. Child to peer group	1.1				1.2	
7. Group member to working group	1.6				1.6	
8. Writer to his audience	4.0			0.7	0.8	2.4
9. Unclassified	10.0	9.5	6.1	5.4	10.2	13.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

First, self as audience. This is difficult, because the self is always the first audience if things are going at all well with a piece of writing. (It may occasionally happen that we write without including the self as a first, a monitoring audience, but this is an indication that things have gone wrong.) And usually there is a second audience, beyond the self: thus writing with the teacher as audience usually means, as we have defined it, writing for the self *and* the teacher. Our category "self as audience" means, therefore, writing which has no audience *but* the self, and that proves to be a very small category. A few cases come in it. If you are writing notes solely for your own use later, that is likely to be "self as audience." More interestingly, if you started to write something with your teacher in mind as audience, something of a speculative and exploratory nature, and you began to reach the limits of your ability to explore in writing, it might become impossible to bear in mind anybody else but yourself. You might continue, however, to explore at this difficult level. This would be an example of "self as audience"—and we have in fact found a small number of pieces of this kind and put them into this category. There are no subdivisions of this category

of "self as audience," so with the second category we move into the group of categories under the general heading of "teacher." But teacher in different roles.

Our category 2, we have called "child to trusted adult." I suspect that this is a role which in America you by tradition have not rated very highly. The trusted adult creates an area in which it is safe for the child to operate. And within that area the child operates *as himself.* This, it seems to me, is the continuation of the parents' function. You know how egocentric the speech of very young children is. They speak from their own point of view. (Piaget demonstrated what he meant by egocentric by reporting a conversation with a small boy, George: "Have you a brother, George?" "Yes, Michael." "Has Michael a brother?" "No.")

All mothers, many fathers, are accustomed to leaning over backwards in order to understand the child's egocentric speech, to understand speech which an ordinary listener would not understand because he doesn't know the child's context. But if a child is speaking in a situation which you have shared day after day with him, then you know that context, and what he says from his egocentric position will still be intelligible to you although it would not be to anybody else. This leaning over backwards is, of course, the tremendous encouragement that enables children to make astonishing progress in learning to speak. And the same, we believe, is true with writing. This leaning over backwards on the part of somebody to encourage you to take the plunge enables a great deal of writing to happen that would not happen otherwise. I do not see this relationship as something you can have with all the children in your class, with most of them at some time or other, or with some of them fairly frequently. One only hopes as children work through the school they may find this kind of trusted adult relationship with some teacher or another at some stage.

And the third category—"pupil to teacher." Let me distinguish this by contrasting it with the fourth category. *Category 4 is "pupil to examiner."* This does not mean a real examiner in an examination, somebody other than the teacher; it means the teacher in the role of examiner. The distinction we have to make then is between "pupil to teacher" and "pupil to examiner." It is, I think, a basic distinction in the classroom situation. We have two roles to perform: one is to be helpful and to teach, and the other is to make reports on progress, to be an examiner. We need to keep these two roles distinct in our minds. The teaching role is part of a dialogue. When the child writes for the *teacher* it is to expect some comment back; it is in fact part of a chain of communication--something will come back from the teacher and something more may be expected from the pupil after that—part of a continuing dialogue. Teacher to examiner on the other hand suggests an endpoint, a show-up, a verdict. However, a great deal of so-called teaching consists in fact in leaping from test to test.

What I have called "pupil to teacher" I must now rename "pupil to teacher, general" for we have found *we need to subdivide, to use that category (3A) and a category 3B which is "pupil to specialist teacher."*

I think it is true in all classrooms that as children get to know a teacher and the teacher's particular interests, the relationship shown in their writing changes. Where there are specialist teachers, and particularly in the older classes, it is the teacher's professional specialist interests—geography, or history, or biology—that create closer links with the children who share this to a greater degree than the average. They build a particularly close relationship with this particular teacher. So again as in the "trusted adult" category, the child develops a relationship with a particular teacher which has a strong personal element in it, a sense of offering him something which will please him and interest him, a sense of sharing a fairly complex context which is not shared by everybody. And because this is so, the teacher tends to gather around him a number of children who form a kind of class elite. Nobody wants elites, and nobody promotes this elite, but it just does happen and it has its virtues. So a geography teacher may have a small number of children, particularly as I say among the elder students, who have become the elite in geography. And when any of them writes, he may well write with the rest of the elite in mind as well as the teacher.

Now to move into the wider known audience. The first of these, *Category 5, we have called "expert to laymen."* It is not a very frequently used category but some good writing comes in it. The writer chooses his own subject because it is something he is an expert in, and he takes trouble to explain his specialism, his particular interest, to those who know less about it than he does.

Category 6—"child to peer group." (I say "child" but, of course, as you move up the age range, you have to change that to "adolescent.") A good deal of this sort of writing is to be found in form magazines and there it is often very banal or facetious or pretentious. But one of the things that good teachers do, of course, is to make children more appreciative of the efforts of their fellows. Under the teacher's influence, then, this kind of writing becomes genuine communication between equals, aimed at interesting and being approved by the rest of the class. A good example of work in this category would be children reading their stories to each other, and profiting from each other's comments.

Category 7—"a group member to a working group." This happens a great deal where you have the students working in small groups. A piece of writing in this category will be a contribution to the joint effort, rather like a working paper in a research team, but at a simpler level. And the teacher may well be an indistinguishable member of this working group, one among the group of readers for whom the writing is intended.

Finally, category 8—"the writer to his audience." (This is in fact the fourth of our main categories, "unknown audience," since we have not subdivided this one.) I think the category explains itself, though it is not always easy in practice to assign scripts to it.

I think comparison of work in English with work in other subjects promises to be interesting. Above all it does maintain a point we have often made, that we have most hope from English teachers of spreading the gospel that language is a means of learning. If children are not using the writing up of things they are interested in, things they have found out, things they have read, but are asked to write simply for the purpose of demonstrating whether they know something, have read what they were assigned—in other words for a testing purpose—then the value of language as an instrument of learning is being ignored. Let me give you one piece of writing. Most of the science writing, 82 percent in fact, came in the examiner category; in other words, on the whole science teachers in England are using language in order to find out whether you have done what you ought to do and know what you ought to know. We did, however, find one piece in an experimental science program which was very different and I thought you might enjoy it. An eleven-year-old is writing about her experiment:

> It is quite easy to make oxygen if you have the right equipment necessary. You will need probably a test tube (a large one), a stand with some acid in it. You will also need a Bunston burner, of course you must not forget a (glass) tank too. A thin test tube should fix neatly in is place. When you have done that fill the glass tank and put the curved end upwards. Put the (glass) tank on the table and fill with water. Very soon you will find that you have made oxygen and glad of it. Potassium chlorate will give up their oxygen when heated. . . .

In fact I need not give you the rest of it because it was the "glad of it" that I wanted you to see. I think it is encouraging to find science teachers who are aware of the linguistic steps by which you arrive at the objectivity, the impersonality, the public nature of a piece of scientific writing—aware of the need to bring the child himself, with all his curiosity and his enthusiasm, along with it.

Now the last and most difficult of the sets of categories: classifying according to function. How do you divide writing in accordance with the job it is doing? We start from Edward Sapir again. Sapir said that ordinary speech is "directly expressive." So I want to begin with a function category which we call "expressive." This is what he says:

> It is because it is learned early and piecemeal in constant association with the color and the requirements of actual contexts that language is rarely a purely referential organisation. It tends to be so only in scientific discourse and even there it may be seriously doubted whether the ideal of pure reference is ever attained by language. Ordinary speech is directly expressive and the purely formal pattern of words, sounds, grammatical form, phrases and sentences are always thought of as compounded by intended or unintended symbolisms of expression if they are to be understood fully from the standpoint of behavior.[3]

In other words all we say in ordinary speech is directly expressive. We are saying things to each other but we are also sending out signals about the kind of people we are. When in a relaxed and friendly mood we talk for the sake of talking, we are in fact doing little more than clothe our thoughts and feelings, our consciousness, in words. As we reveal the changing pattern of our consciousness to our friends, we reveal ourselves. Sapir says elsewhere in this same essay: "For a human being every experience is saturated with verbalism." It is very easy for this saturation to come to overflow point, and the overspill of this verbalism is expressive speech. Putting it more simply, it is when I take my wife for a drive, and I drive and she talks. That is expressive talk. What she talks about may be something that happened before she left home, something that goes by the car window, something she sees in the distance, or something that merely floats into mind. Such speech is very close to the person: it has, so to speak, not gone very far from its origin in the person who utters it.

Sapir points out that expressive speech becomes referential by a process he calls "disassociation." In other words, it sheds some of its elements in order to change into referential speech. And what it sheds are clearly the uniquely personal elements, the inessential and transient elements that belong only to the here and now, references to our moods and feelings, all those things which are part of the unique experience as we individually experience it, but are not necessary to what we want to say. So Sapir has a bird with one wing; the expressive speech is the matrix, the starting point, which may move into referential language. We worked with the one-winged bird for quite a long time, and then we decided to try a bird that could fly, a bird with two wings. We want to suggest that there is a move also from expressive writing but in a different direction, a move towards what we call "formal" or "poetic" writing. Expressive writing is for us, then, the center point—still a kind of matrix, tending to be on the move, either to referential writing on the left, or to formal, poetic writing on the right. But I must try now to make the terms mean something to you.

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[3] Sapir, *Culture, Language and Personality*, p. 10.

Let me tell you something that happened about a year ago just as we got to the stage in our thinking that I have outlined. I went out on a very sunny day, just around the corner from where I work, and sat in Russell Square, which is one of these lovely, old residential squares in London now open to the public. The fountains were playing and the trees were looking very nice and so were all the girls. I went and sat by the fountains, with a pencil and a pad of paper on my knee—a way of thinking aloud, so to speak. And this is the first part of what I wrote. (I wrote idly, and you have to imagine the scene to get into the spirit of it.)

> An aspect of memory—shoring something against the ruin of time. When I speak, it has a brief existence as part of what is shared between us. When I write, it is there for someone else to read or for me to come back to. Writing it is surely a way of giving substance to what otherwise would be gone.

I have given you a little of the context that went into that scribbled down thought, but it still does not mean very much to you. It is a kind of writing that would not mean much to somebody who had not shared the talking and thinking that led up to it. My colleagues would know what I was talking about; anyone coming in from elsewhere would not. So I next rewrote the fragment in a form in which it might have appeared in the official report on the research we are doing. This is how it turned out when I did that.

> Sapir defines expressive language almost entirely in terms of speech. Can the term be helpfully applied to writing? Is there a kind of writing, habitual perhaps with some people, occasional with many, that is as it were, an aspect of memory, a means of preserving by formulation in lasting form? And if so, what are its relations to expressive speech?

I have simply made it more explicit, supplying parts of the context which in the previous version were taken for granted. And I have excluded little things which might indicate my personal feelings about what I was doing, and where I was and so on. Next, following my own nose, I wrote this:

> Words on a page, an aspect of memory—
> A shoring against the ruin of time—
> Fragments.
> Spoken, their living on would be brief,
> But a sharing
> (Sharing against the ruin of time
> the desert of isolation)
> When I write them, they are *there*

And one of us, sooner or later,
Though perhaps alone, will read them.

What has happened here I think I would call a heightening of the implicit. I can't say "making it more implicit," because that would suggest that it became less accessible to the reader. But this seems to be moving from the personal, from the expressive, (which might well be inaccessible to a stranger) nearer to what is in fact a public form of utterance. We are accustomed to reading poetic language and making responses to it. So what has happened I think is an extension of, and a focusing upon, the implicit elements. Certainly there seems to be more emphasis upon the mood, the feelings. But perhaps the most noticeable difference between this and the first version lies in the attention paid to sounds (as distinct from sense). Thus, the *sound* of the word "shoring" is allowed to suggest a line of thought: more specifically it suggests a similar word "sharing," and when the word "sharing" comes into mind its meaning is taken up and used.

It is not my intention to suggest that every piece of writing must start as expressive in order to become in the end either formal, poetic or on the other hand referential. What I do suggest is that this is an important sequence in an individual's development: that the earliest form of writing ability will be the ability to write the expressive form and as progress comes, we shall see children moving more and more towards one or other, and eventually towards both the other wings. I think the most difficult job we have on hand is to establish the two wings as distinct from each other. It seems right to suppose that under pressures of one kind, the expressive changes, in the way Sapir described, towards the communicative, the referential (the language of informing, explaining and other ways of cooperating) and under pressures of another kind moves towards the formal, the poetic—a kind of public utterance, but not communicative, not informing people, not participant language. On the two wings then we have language in the role of participant and language in the role of spectator.

There is no doubt at all we need this complexity in order to use the participant/spectator distinction in any practical way; the other was too simple. Let me try to illustrate another way in which the two poles may be distinguished. If you go and collect shells on the beach and bring them back home and arrange them, then you may do so in two quite different ways. You may be a biologist, and you may arrange them in a sort of museum showcase in order to illustrate the relationships between the various species of things you have found. And if I was a better biologist than you, I might come along and say,

"You've got that wrong." On the other hand, you may be doing something quite different. You may arrange the shells on the mantelpiece, or on a window ledge in order to make something that pleases you. That too would be an *arrangement*, not a haphazard display. If I come along now, I can't say "You've got that wrong." I might say "I don't like it," but I can't say to you, "You don't like it." In other words, you are arranging them this time in a way *to please yourself*. And when you are doing that, it is not the *truth* of the thing that matters. but the pleasing appearance of it. The stress is upon the form, the shape, the pattern, the relationships in space, and so on. This seems to me to be one way of differentiating the referential (which is to arrange things as they ought to be in accordance with the facts, in order to participate in the world's work) from the poetic, which is to stress the forms and to produce a coherent arrangement which satisfies the maker.

One last point about this distinction. We found help from Valery, the French poet writing about the nature of discourse. He makes a distinction based on the way we respond to a piece of writing, the way we relate it to the rest of our knowledge and experience of the world. On the one hand, when we read a discursive piece of writing, or, in the terms of our function categories a piece of referential writing, any small part, any segment of it may be of importance and relevance to our affairs. We may respond to or make use of this segment in isolation, or one item here and another there. That is to say, the way we "contextualize" the writing is, or may be, by fragments. But poetic writing, or literature, is constructed to resist this kind of piecemeal use. Its segments are related to each other to make a unity, and it is the whole that a reader contextualizes, or relates to. Coleridge made a familiar point when he called literature "esemplastic," all of one piece.

We intend to use five categories at this level because we want to see how children's writing develops from the expressive *towards* the poles. So we have "expressive" in the center, "referential" and "formal or poetic" as the two poles, and two transitional categories between the centre and the two poles. Now we have on our hands the problem of subdividing the communicative and the poetic. It is not too difficult on the referential side perhaps—the linguistic philosophers have a good deal to say about the processes of stating, informing, persuading, explaining and so on. But how to subdivide on the poetic end of the scale remains at the moment a problem.

I want to finish by offering two examples. They are writings that we suggest should be placed in the transitional categories. It seems likely that most writing by children up to eleven or twelve will either be in the expressive category or be moving out from the expressive towards the other categories, rather than

arriving there. I think arrival at the referential category will not on the whole happen until the very last stages of the elementary school. The following seems to me to be an example of writing in the transitional category between expressive and referential writing.

How I Filtered My Water Specimens

> When we were down at Mr. Haris's farm I brought some water from the brook back with me. I took some from a shallow place by the oak tree, and some from a deep place by the walnut tree. I got the specimens by placing a jar in the brook and let the water run into it. Then I brought them back to school to filter . . .

And then he tells exactly what he did and finishes:

> The experiment that I did shows that where the water was deeper and was not running fast there was a lot more silt suspended as little particles in the water. You could see this by looking at the filter paper, where the water was shallow and fast there was less dirt suspended in it.

That is getting quite a way towards the referential, towards telling anybody who wants to know how the writer went about his experiment. But he says it was *Mr. Harris's farm*, and the shallow place was *by the oak tree* and the deep place was *by the walnut tree*: it *was* an oak tree and it *was* a walnut tree, and this was important to him because he was there and he knows. But this part of his writing is directed towards a system different from the referential. Features that I would call expressive have not yet been shed in the transitional stage of moving towards the referential.

This last piece of work by a seven-year-old girl represents, I think, a transition much more difficult to demonstrate: that between expressive and poetic. You will no doubt be familiar with the cataloging these young children produce in their writing—lists of things they saw or did or even ate, sometimes! But I think as this child was writing her catalog, the actual sounds, the form of the sounds of the words, caught her fancy and became an influence upon what she was writing. And that seems to me to be the only way I can now tentatively suggest how the change is made from the expressive in this direction of the poetic.

> Class 1 had Monday off and Tuesday off and all the other classes had Monday and Tuesday off and we played hide-and-seek and my big sister hid her eyes and canted up to ten and me and my brother had to hide and I went behind the Dust-bin and I was thinking about the summer and the butter-cups and

> Daisies all those things and fresh grass and violets and roses and lavender an
> the twinkling sea and the star in the night and the black sky and the moo
> (Sally Fryman

As I have said, I think most of the work written in the elementary schoo will be in the expressive and the transitional categories. I want now to suggest that it would be dangerous to try to foreshorten that development. If you try to make a short-cut it will probably end by being a short circuit. You cannot, I believe, teach the referential, the expository, as such: it has to be arrived at, it seems to me, by the shedding of certain aspects of the expressive. The shedding process is highly intricate: it is as though there existed a delicately adjusted threshold which allows the integrity and individuality of the writer to move through into the writing yet leaves the finished product objective, referential. By short circuiting the process, I believe we produce the *form* of expository writing without the vigour, the personality, of a writer—a linguistic tool which will have very limited uses indeed.

Standards of acceptability are of course important and it is important that the children know that we care about the conventions of written form. It is also important that we should exercise patience with regard to expecting them. The children should know these standards are not the thing we mainly care about. That language should in fact do justice to experience is a much more important standard.

The Student's Writing

We cannot receive what is too unexpected, for expectations are the base upon which what we find must be built. I can illustrate this best in reference to the process of reading. We have come to understand reading as an active process, with a kind of monologue of response going on all the time as we read. We approach the book (or the letter or the magazine article) with certain expectations already active. The children you teach approach anything you bring to them with expectations very much based on what they think of you, and what they have found your offerings to yield to them on previous occasions. So every piece of reading is approached with certain expectations. As we read, these expectations are being modified—indeed our modified expectations about the world at the end of the reading constitute in a very general sense the "meaning" of what we have read. If such a description is not to be nonsense, however, we have to use the word "modified" to cover a whole range of processes. Expectations about a book aroused in me by its title may be sharply modified—contradicted almost—by what I read in the first line of the text.

To read a book is, in this sense, like any other encounter with the world. All living consists in the generation of expectations, the modification of those expectations in the light of what actually happens, and the reformed expectations when the experience is over. Perhaps we need an electronic model for behavior. I don't know whether you know anything about radio-communications —nor do I know whether my experience of it, which is twenty-five years old now, is entirely out of date. Certainly when I was last concerned with such things, one of the basic forms of radio communication was that by which a powerful carrier wave was transmitted from the receiving station, and a quite weak wave which bore the message modulated that carrier wave, and so the message was received by the receiving station. No transmission meant no modulations and no message. Living is like that: we generate expectations and

what the world indicates to our senses has meaning for us insofar as it modifies those expectations.

At this point I want to bring to your notice the work of George Kelly, the late psychologist from Ohio, who wrote a book called *Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs.* His seems to me to be the ideal educational psychology, and is very unlike most current educational psychology. In fact, George Kelly calls those psychologies the "push and pull," or the needs and drives psychologies, whereas he takes a human and not a mechanical model for man. For him, man is essentially "the scientist." He says how he began thinking this way—how, as a psychiatrist, he was seeing patients at one time in the day and seeing doctoral students with their psychological theses at another time in the day, and how it struck him that the problems of the doctoral student framing a piece of research were of the same essential nature as the behavioral problems of people who come to see psychiatrists. In other words, man is above all a creature who predicts, who generates hypotheses about experience, puts them to the test in reality, and then modifies his hypotheses in the light of what reality does to him. So for him man is a predictor, a scientist. And if you regard all behavior in these terms, it must follow, as George Kelly claims, that living and learning are so much the same kind of process—that we no longer need a special psychology of learning; we can afford as he puts it to "kick learning upstairs."

Human behavior as a whole is to be explained in psychological terms which are the terms in which you would want to describe learning behavior. The point I want to pick up particularly from Kelly is that we predict in the light of past experience. In other words in the light of what experience has shown us, we create a template (to use his image) which we place over the world, trying it out for fit and modifying it as far as we are able where the fit is bad. But if there is no model, no template, then we have no means of coming to grips with what is there at all. A bad template is better than none at all. The template stands, of course, for what we have called "expectations," a framework of expectations. We don't want *an* expectation, because that would mean far too rigid an approach to reality. I think people have gone to occasions of this sort in the past and come away utterly disappointed because they went with an overriding expectation and that expectation was not fulfilled. What we need is a sheaf of expectations, multiple expectations flexibly held, to which we may hope to match the experience that comes to us, and in matching it we can hope to give meaning to what does happen.

I am reminded that when George Miller came to lecture in London a few years ago he entertained a somewhat similar speculation in a particular context. He said it might well turn out to be that when we listen to somebody else speak-

ing, or when we read in a book, we are able to take in the syntax of the sentences spoken or read because we are ourselves generating alternative possible sentence structures and matching them with what is said. If this proves to be true, it will illustrate in a highly specific kind of behavior our carrier-wave model for behavior in general.

I want now to try and apply this notion about a framework of expectation to explain some of the uses we have for language. Ernst Cassirer, a German philosopher who wrote latterly in America, suggested in his *Essay on Man* that, of all the creatures, man is the one who responds most slowly to his environment; and that this is so because he responds *less directly*. All other creatures, he says, have their receptor systems by which they receive messages from the world, and their effector nervous systems by which they respond to the messages, and these are directly linked. When we reach the level of man, however, we find a third system, shunted, as it were, across the other two. And that third system is a "symbolic" or a "representative" system. So that man by his receptor system receives signals from the outside world, translates them into symbols and responds in the light of his symbolization. For that reason, says Cassirer, we ought not any longer to speak of man as *animal rationale*, because to reason is only one of the many things that man is able to do. But symbolizing represents all the more civilized aspects of man's behavior. Man's culture is a collection of ways of symbolizing. So to call man *animal rationale* is to speak of only one of the functions that essentially define man; one should speak of him as *animal symbolicum*.

Putting this very crudely and simply, the point is that we *represent* reality to ourselves. What is happening, has happened and is gone; the representation stays on. The representation has duration in time in a way events do not. It is from the representation, therefore, that man builds up for himself a retrospect; and the retrospect, when you turn it the other way around and make it a body of expectations for what the future may contain, becomes a prospect. We have already looked at the "naming game" and suggested that this may be seen as a way in which the young child calls into existence the objects of his immediate environment. The world that is finally called into existence by linguistic and other ways of representing or symbolizing it is a world which stays there when the child goes to sleep, or when he moves away somewhere else. Yeats, you may remember, has a line, "Nor dread nor hope attend a dying animal." Hope and dread belong to a creature with a sense of past and future, and man in representing his world achieves this sense.

"A representation of the world"—can we come any nearer to knowing what this formula means? If you draw a chair you make a *representation* of that object; if you draw a map you make a *representation* of a geographical area; that is simple

enough. But if you hear a snatch of a familiar tune, then somehow you must have been carrying around with you a *representation* of sounds you had heard previously; if you catch sight of a familiar face in a crowd, somehow you must have carried around with you a *representation* of a face you have seen in the past. I think those two pairs of examples span the senses of "representation" that we need to take into account when we claim that we respond to the world via a representation of the world constructed from past experience.

If I construct a map of a district I am visiting, I am recording my experiences in exploring that district. You might put it another way, however, and say that I am organizing my expectations with regard to this district when next I come to visit it, expectations by means of which I shall travel intelligently in it. Now if you make this image even cruder and suppose that the map is inside my mind, that I carry it around with me all the time and modify it in the light of every new journey in the area, then you have a (perhaps misleadingly) simple picture of what is meant by the theory of symbolizing, the theory of representation.

My representation of the world differs from yours, not only because experience uses us differently, the world uses us differently, but also because my way of representing what happens to us is different from your way. We are neither of us cameras, although we operate in part as cameras because we draw in onto this screen from the outside world a representation of what is out there. But at the same time, we project on the screen, each from our own inner world, our own needs, desires, emotions. So the picture on my screen is the resultant of what I have drawn in from the outside world and what I have projected from my own inner needs, and it is for this reason that my representation differs from yours even in relation to experiences we have had in common. (Any distinction between practical writing, which deals with reality, and the other kind of writing which deals with internal data must, it seems to me, be made in the light of these complications if we are not to oversimplify it.) You may remember in the story of Kon Tiki that the party had a frightening encounter one evening with some snakes in the garden of a place they visited. Later that evening, we are told, they were sitting indoors by lamplight and they mistook the giant shadow of a scorpion on the wall for the shadow of a *giant scorpion*. In other words their picture of the world at that moment was one which was heavily affected by their own feelings derived from the previous experience. (Projection was in the ascendancy over introjection, to put the matter in as ugly a way as possible!)

Because representation lasts in time in a way that events do not, we are able to work upon the representation after the events are over. And not only are we ourselves, but other people are also able to work upon it. By working upon the representation, I mean that we improvise upon our experience of the world; and

we may improvise freely, with very little concern for what the real world is like, as we do in our daydreams. We become, in our daydreams, rich, beautiful, successful people, and all this may be highly unlikely, but it is one kind of improvisation and it is derived, clearly, from the raw material of our own actual experiences. On the other hand, we may improvise with a very close eye upon what life is really like and our improvisation will be more evidently something to do with predicting, with expectations about the real world. The small child who likes to think the earth *might* all be made of paper and the sea *might* all be ink is improvising upon the world he knows without much concern for what is really there. On the other hand, if I were taking over a job from somebody and asking questions about what is likely to happen, I should be improvising upon my past experience with a very close eye on the predictive value of my representation of it. In the daydreaming, it is projection that is in the ascendancy; in planning my course of action in a new job, it is *introjection*, the drawing in from the actual world, that is dominant. And all shades of possibilities between these two extremes take place in our improvising upon our representations of the world.

Martin Buber, the Jewish educationist, came to London many years ago, and gave us a lecture I have never forgotten. One of the things he said then was, "Experience comes to man 'as I,' but it is by experience 'as we' that he builds the common world in which he lives." We each build our own representation of the world, but greatly affect each other's representation, so that much of what we build is built in common. As teachers we are concerned with experience that comes to the child "as I"; I think we are even more concerned with experience that comes to the child "as we," and from which the common world is built. Part of our difficulties in school and in society are due to the fact that "the common world" as it is built up in different communities is very far from common in a more general sense.

Experience comes to the small boy "as I," but what he makes of it is very much affected by what his mother says, when he tells her all about it. As he does so, he is structuring his own experience, he is working upon his representation of the world, but what she says about it is also built into his representation and considerably affects the shape that he gives to experience.

That has brought me once again directly into the area of language, language not now primarily for communication, but primarily "for oneself." Edward Sapir, the father of American linguistics, whose wisdom we seem continually to have to go back to after all these years, had this to say: "The primary function of language is generally said to be communication." But he demurs and goes on to suggest: "It is best to admit that language is primarily a vocal actualization of the tendency to

hoc handling of this element, but by the reduction of experience to familiar form."[1] He is saying then, as Cassirer did, that we do not handle reality directly *ad hoc*, we handle it via a representation. And language is one way of representing, one way of making the map I was referring to. It is nevertheless a key way, because it is the means of introducing organization into all the other ways. It becomes, as it were, the organizing principle by which they interrelate and form a corpus. Language is able to do this on account of its own highly complex internal structure.

We have already looked at the use of language to classify objects and other items of experience, and in doing so we were considering an aspect of "synonymity," the relation between items substitutable for each other. But synonymity is only one of the dimensions which form part of the complex organization of language. Oppositeness is another relationship that is systematically built into language. A child may discover that something that seems wide in one situation will tend to seem narrow in another situation, and then he comes to learn that even the narrowest thing has *width;* and similarly even the lightest thing has *weight.* He can ask you, "How heavy is your bag?" when it is obviously very light, or, "How old is the kitten?" when obviously the kitten is very young. In other words, there is built into the English language a way of dealing with the complicated nature of bi-polar oppositeness, and this provides us with a means of coping with the relationship in actuality. There are relationships of sequence and consequence systematically built into language. But perhaps the most generally useful relationship in language is that of hierarchy. A small child will at first use "flower" and "daisy" as though they were alternative names for the same object. But after a time he learns that he can say some things about buttercups *and* daisies by using the name "flower." In the same way, "dog" and "animal" may at first be terms at the same hierarchical level. But in due course he learns that it is a silly question to ask, "What kind of a tail has an animal?" (And later still that it is also a silly question to ask, "What kind of a tail has a dog?")

Hierarchy is the linguistic dimension by means of which we make higher order generalizations and abstractions. When you and I talk about "intelligence" or "delinquency," we are using a very high degree of abstraction, and we do so with safety only so long as we are able, if need be, to recover the concrete realities upon which the abstractions are built. That is to say, we must be able in our thinking to refer these words back to the level of *people behaving* in this

[1] Edward Sapir, *Culture, Language and Personality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), pp. 14-15.

way and that way. Children may parrot abstract words long before they are able to *arrive* at the abstractions. Their ability to move back and forth between the abstractic and the concrete data is what signifies their mastery of the abstract concept. Complicated relationships enter into the grammatical structure of language, relationships between subjects and verbs and objects, between words of the adjective kind, words of the noun kind, and so on—all of which are ways of constructing a grid that we place upon the confusion and flux of experience. Language thus plays an important part in the process George Kelly described of forging from past experience the template by which we apprehend the present.

We must go on now to consider how we apply this grid to experience. I want to begin by referring to Helen Keller. You may remember that Helen Keller lost powers of sight and hearing at a very very early age, so that she was, from almost infancy, blind and deaf and dumb. They tried very hard to teach her language, spelling words to her by touch. And they went about it by trying to get her to use this language to ask for what she wanted. This led to a long and disappointing phase of failure. And then one day, to use Helen Keller's own words about her teacher:

> She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a wordless sensation may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.
>
> We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful, cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.
>
> I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me.[2]

The "strange new sight" is that she is now able to *represent* everything because language is giving her the symbols with which to represent it. What was

[2] Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 23-24.

indefinite and remote is brought into focus: and the process is cumulative, since what was brought into focus yesterday remains to form a context for today's discoveries.

We talk and we write about experience then, in order to shape it and incorporate it into the body of our past experiences. Joseph Church, the American child development psychologist, gives a simple example. The morning after the big event, he says—the ball, or the big dance, or whatever it is—all the telephone lines are booked because the adolescents and the matrons are telephoning each other in order to chew over the events of the big event and so "add it to the corpus of their experience." He doesn't say what the men are doing—probably sleeping it off behind their desks.

What is organized is far more than words. What is organized is the fabric of experience as we represent it to ourselves in sight and sound, in emotional colour, and so on. What is organized is far more than words, but words provide the means by which we organize it. It often happens that as we try to recall an event, to revive some vague memory, we find ourselves searching for a word, the name of a place or a person perhaps. And with the word, when we have found it, the whole thing comes into focus. It is as though language were the Ariadne's thread by which we penetrate the maze.

It is no less than a representation of the world as we have experienced it, this verbally organized corpus of experience. The process sounds rather like rolling a snowball in the snow. But it is not so simple as that: with the snowball, you just go on adding more snow. But every new experience you meet will require some adjustment to what was already there. This is a point I must return to.

Linguists distinguish two kinds of speech and I want to dismiss one of them in order to talk about the other one. This first kind is speech so closely interwoven with behavior that speech and action are interchangeable. For example, you may go into a shop and the shopkeeper may come up to you and say, "May I help you?" or he may merely stand there looking expectant. You may pick up a bar of chocolate and hand it to him, or you may say, "I'll take this please." Or you may say, "Have you a half pound block?" and if you do, he might say, "I'm sorry, I haven't," or he might say, "Yes, I think so," or he might simply give it to you. In other words, action, or speech, or speech with action represent interchangeable units in that string of behavior. Or, to give a different kind of example, if you have a bulky parcel to get through the door, you may manipulate the door somehow or you may use language to keep the door open by somebody else's agency. I must point out in passing that in using speech of this kind—speech interchangeable with action—we are

making use of language to structure experience. We are adding to our picture of the world in that sort of situation as we go along, in the course of interacting. But it is the other kind of speech that I want particularly to consider. This is the kind that the linguists have rather unkindly called "displaced speech." It is displaced because it is no longer speech and action as part of one behavior sequence, but speech which we use to go back and *report* upon events, describe events, record events, refer to events. Everything is in speech now. Things that happened and things that were said are all now put into words as our report upon the happening. From my point of view, this is a key role for language, a key role in connection with the construction of a corpus of experience or a body of expectations. We do habitually use language to go back over events in order to make something of them, to "process" them a second time, as it were.

Now, I may go back over experiences for different reasons. I may start telling you a long story of what has happened to me in order to work up to the point of asking if I can raise a loan with you. In this case, I am pursuing my own ends. Since my affairs are a part of the world's affairs, I am *participating* in the world's affairs. Or I may go back over my own experiences in order to enjoy them again, and to invite you to enjoy them with me. I am not then grinding any axes, I haven't any irons in the fire, I am not pursuing any practical ends; I am no longer participating in the world's affairs. I am in the role, not of participant, but of *spectator.*

Let me try and put this more clearly. Imagine a party, and the party is over. You sit around talking about what happened at the party in order to try and identify which of your guests it could have been who left a piece of jewelry in the back of the arm chair. Now this is helpful of you; you are being useful and helpful. You are taking part in the world's affairs, in the broadest possible sense. You are trying to get something done. But I imagine the conversation will very soon drift into another vein, and you will find yourselves discussing the behavior of your guests, not in order to be helpful, but in order to enjoy their behavior in a way you could not enjoy it while they were still behaving. You enter into and savor the events of the party in a way you could not do when you were a part of and participating in the party. That then is what I mean by being in the role of spectator. You are no longer doing something helpful, just something very enjoyable. You are going back over events in order to enjoy them after they are over.

Let me make a very fine point by way of illustration. It may not be of any help; on the other hand it may. I once saw a book which a six-year-old boy in an infant school had drawn in. He had taken a piece of brown chalk

and scribbled very boldly over the page and on it he had written,

> Exploring the rocks
> a place called Cromer
> I knocked the loose lumps of mud.

(Cromer is a seaside holiday place.)

The teacher liked that, but she liked it even better when with a red pencil she had made it: "Exploring the rocks *at* a place called Cromer (*comma*) I knocked the loose lumps of mud." My very fine point is this: I want to suggest that she had turned what was intended to be language in the role of spectator into language in the role of participant. In other words, what the boy was doing with his language was just what he was doing with his chalk; going back over his experience in words in order to gloat over it, to enjoy it again. And his intention as far as the teacher was concerned was that he should offer it to her and invite her to enjoy it with him. What she had done was to turn it into a situation where a boy *informs* a teacher of something that has happened. "Informing" is one of the useful things that we do for each other. It is a part of the world's work and to inform someone is to be a participant.

We may take up the role of spectator for the mere enjoyment of doing so. It is this role we are in when we improvise upon our picture of the world in our daydreaming or when, as the girl of fourteen was doing when she surveyed what it was like to be fourteen, we contemplate the future in a more sober fashion. As we speculate around other people's experiences in the role of spectator, we extend our picture of the world by rearranging the raw materials in the shape of somebody else's experience, and in this way we can become experienced in situations and events that we have no first-hand experience of. We do this for pleasure, for fun—which is another way of saying that we do it because we never cease to long for more lives than the one we have. As participants we only have one life; as spectators, an infinite number is open to us.

But we take up this role also for other reasons. We do it from need. I think I can illustrate this best with reference to the way young children improvise upon experience in their make-believe games. Jean Piaget has pointed out that make-believe games are at a peak in the period of a child's development when his exploring of the world is at its most active. He does not yet know from experience what are the limits of experience and therefore much that is in his picture of the world is tentative and subject to frequent modification in the light of further experiences. His picture of the world as it is and as it seems to him has a good deal of the "seems" and rather less of the "is." It is

for this purpose, Piaget suggests, that make-believe games occupy a good deal of his time. (He does not suggest that all make-believe games have this function, but that some do, sometimes.) He tells the story of a small girl who went into the kitchen and saw a trussed duck on the kitchen table, and was taken aback by the rather ugly looking creature. A day or two later Piaget saw her lying on the sofa with her knees crooked up and her arms stuck out, and Piaget said to her, "What's the matter, do you have a pain?" And the girl said, "No, I'm the dead duck." And no doubt she was very much enjoying being the dead duck.[3] Piaget tells the story elsewhere of his small boy, who had taken his walking stick and hidden it. Piaget wanted it, and was cross with the boy. Again, after a day or two, he saw the boy re-enacting the whole scene, playing both parts—the father and the son—and on this occasion all was sweetness and light and no hard words were said. The experience itself had been unexpected, because the child had not up to then built a world in which fathers could be so cross. The picture had to be modified to allow for this sort of event. There are two things we can do with experiences that are too unexpected for us to adjust to in our stride: we can drop them altogether, can exclude them from our picture of the world. (And we then go on living in a world which is to that degree untrue to the experiences we have had of it.) Or, and this is what one hopes we do, we can go back over the experiences and try to come to terms with them. The child in the case I have quoted was not dropping the experience, but going back over it and getting as near to it as at that stage he could. The make-believe play involves words of course, but here we are concerned more directly with the fact that we can go back over experiences simply by talking or writing about them in order to come to terms with recalcitrant elements in them.

In most experiences, then, we have our expectations, we undergo the experiences, we modify our expectations in the light of what happens, and we do all this in our stride. But if an experience is too unlike our expectations then we may not be able to do that. We participate as best we can, because events don't wait for us, but in the end we are left in a state of mental indigestion and we need to go back over the experience to symbolize, represent, improvise upon the representation in order to come to terms with it. This is to take up the role of spectator out of need rather than for simple enjoyment.

Let me show you one or two examples of children writing in the role of spectator—for fun, for need, for either. Here is a piece by Patricia, aged nine.

[3] Jean Piaget, *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*, trans. C. Gattegno and F. M. Hodgson (London: Heinemann, 1951) pp. 133-134.

A Snowy Day

Once upon a time there was a very old cottage and in it there lived a very

Material removed due to copyright restrictions.

and the man flooded the other room out with tears.[4]

An improvisation upon her experience of people and houses and weather; and I imagine the main reason was just to have a dig at these grownups, who can be so *odd* at times. Another girl, Amanda, aged six and a half:

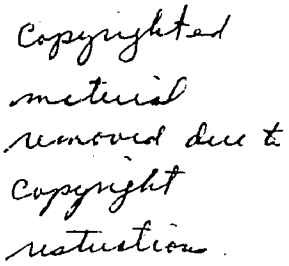
> There was a child of a witch who was ugly. He had pointed ears, thin legs and was born in a cave. He flew in the air holding on nothing just playing games. When he saw ordinary boys and girls, he hit them with his broomstick. A cat came along. He arched his back at the girls and boys and made them run away. When they'd gone far, far away, the cat meowed softly at the witch child. The cat loved the child. The child loved the cat. The cat was the onlee thing the child loved in the world.
>
> (Amanda Brown)

For fun? From need? Mercifully, we rarely know the answer to that question with any certainty. I would hazard a guess that what Amanda describes is at heart her own situation in some way or another; and that she is able to say more about it in terms of witches and cats than she could do in any more direct terms. My last example was written by an eleven-year-old girl:

[4]Patricia Byrne, "A Snowy Day," in *Children as Writers*, 2d ed. (1960), p. 8. Reproduced by kind permission of the Daily Mirror Children's Literary Competition, London.

BED TIME

I am in bed



All is quiet.[5]

It just so happened that months after this was sent to me (following some BBC programs I did) I came across by accident the information that the girl who wrote it had never had a home which showed anything of the love and security that are represented in the poem. So I knew then how strongly this was written from *need:* what isn't there in reality must be built in words, and becomes a precious object.

I want now to suggest that what we traditionally call "literature" should be defined as "the written language in the role of spectator." This would be to define literature in a way that is not normative. Usually we think of it in such a way that some things are *good enough* to be literature and some things are not good enough to be literature. But I want a definition which sees an essential link between the kind of writing from children which I have quoted and the work of poets and novelists: a link not in *how well* they do it but in the *kind of thing* they set out to do. Why should we not define the literature children write in similar terms to the literature they read? After all, Picasso paints, Turner painted, Reynolds painted and children paint. Why should literature always be something other people have done, and not something that people do?

"The written language in the role of spectator." Action and decision belong

[5] London Association for the Teaching of English, *And When You Are Young* (1960).

to the role of participant. The spectator is free from responsibility to act and decide. I think the small child uses this freedom to attend to other things, particularly to *forms*: forms of art in the utterance: to linguistic forms, to the form of events, and especially to the pattern or the form of feeling. That small children can be interested in the forms of language is clear from a story told at the Dartmouth Seminar about the child who danced about the floor saying "maximum capacity, maximum capacity, maximum capacity." He obviously found great pleasure in the movement, and the sound, the physical qualities of the spoken words. Children can respond to the patterns of events at a very young age. Here is the evidence of a three-and-a-half-year-old girl who summed up Cinderella as: "A bit sad book about two ugly sisters and a girl they were ugly to."

On the pattern of feelings there is more I must say. Feeling, when we participate, is usually something that leads us to take action, or to make decisions. It is the spur to action. When fathers come home in the evening and hear all that has happened to children during the day, provided they know the kids are tucked up safely in bed, they can positively *enjoy* the hairbreadth escapes of the children's day—in a way the mother certainly could not, earlier in the day, when she was participating. She now, in turn, is a spectator also as she gives her account. She can enter into and savor the fear which earlier on was simply a spur to her action. (For as participators we are unable to act, then we drain away feelings in the form of anxiety.) It is only as spectators that we can savor the quality of feelings *as feelings*. There can be no doubt that literature owes a great deal of its force to the patterns, the varying tensions of feeling, the balancing of love against hate, or jealousy against fear—all the different forms that emotions take throughout the plot of a story.

D. W. Harding, the English psychologist who is also an eminent literary critic, has pointed out that as we approach experiences as participants we evaluate the situation in order to take action in light of our evaluation. But he goes on to suggest that when we are spectators and not participants we are able to make a more ample evaluation, one which refers to a broader framework of values. And it is for this reason that he believes that robbing a man of experiences in which he is a spectator materially affects his personality and character.

Our theme is writing, but let me add a word or two about the spoken language in the role of spectator to complete my picture. I have referred to the chat you have at the end of the big event; even when the event is a match or an arduous cross country race, an event that had its hardships and anxieties and even miseries, you can enjoy those hardships and miseries when they are over and you go back and talk about them. Chat or gossip is one form of speech in the role of spectator. Another rather different one is improvised dramatic speech, and here

the shaping of the language in terms of the feeling is a highly important component—part indeed of the way in which improvised drama can reach out to become an art form.

We take up the role of spectator, then, in order to enjoy past experiences, to come to terms with past experiences, to enter into other people's experiences. These will have a greater or lesser relevance to our actual experience. And yet, I think in all of them the desire to perfect our predictive equipment, to make our representation of the world as full as possible, is always to some extent involved. Even in our wildest fantasy, in other words, a part of the motive is the need to test out the limits of the possibilities of experience.

If one accepts the general thesis that man does not respond directly to experiences, but builds from his experiences a representation of the world, then it follows that two courses are open to him. He can respond to the real world, operate in the real world, via the representation; or he can operate directly upon the representation itself. That is, in fact, my basic distinction between being a participant and being a spectator. And what I have stressed has been the importance of the spectator role activity, both in reading literature and in writing it.

There is another aspect to its importance. What we build with the help of language is not only a word picture, it is also a self picture. My way of representing the world, projecting my inner needs, makes me different from you, and you respond to me in the light of my representation. Thus, first, it is the way I talk and write about the world and think about the world that makes you know what sort of person I am. And secondly, it seems to me that I know what sort of person I am in the light of the reflection from your responses to me. To put this in another way, we build our picture of ourselves as the center point of an infinite number of interactions with other people and, to a lesser degree, perhaps, with things, the objects of our world. Thus as we build, as we represent our world, so we are, at one degree removed, building the picture of ourselves.

It is a cumulative process; the early stages of structuring are the most difficult, and once you have put a few of the main members in place, the rest will follow more easily. It is a cumulative process, and the job for us as teachers is to get it started. And after that, once it is started, it must be seen to pay its way, by the child himself. For learning, in the end, is a door only opened from the inside. You can't teach by battering your way through the defences; you have got to have the traitor within the gates to open them for you. And this will take all kinds of patience and ingenuity in finding devices for encouragement. Once a start is made, the learning has to appear to the child to pay its way. And I want to suggest that the kind of writing we have been talking about here, the language in the role of spectator, is that which above all will seem to pay dividends to the

child. For a child has to "make something of the world" in the sense of making it meaningful to himself, before he can "make something of it" in the sense of turning it to his own advantage. The practical must come second to the interpretive, the participant role second to the spectator role.

Student Writing and Evaluation

This article is based upon a tape recording of a session devoted to evaluation of student writing. Britton had distributed a few samples of writing while others were read aloud. These became the basis for the comments included here.—Ed.

MY TEACHER

Mrs. Bond is nice she shouts

material omitted due to copyright restrictions.

she says jump I jump.

(Kevin, aged 6)[1]

Kevin actually wrote this, in his own handwriting, on his own paper and sent it in this form to the *Daily Mirror*. I think it's really important to raise this issue of form. Would it have been better if "My Teacher" had been printed in solid lines? Would we then want to read it "as prose"?

> Mrs. Bond is nice, she shouts and makes me jump and when she says "get your sum books out" I nearly faint, and when she says "put on your pumps" I think I run round the world. And I run across the playground and when she says run I run, and when she says jump I jump.

[1]Kevin Brown, "My Teacher," in *Children as Writers*, 9th ed. (1967), p. 11. Reproduced by kind permission of the Daily Mirror Children's Literary Competition, London.

Can you imagine it set out that way and making you read it that way, and do you reckon that does more justice to it than the way he set it out—in lines? What do you think? I think it is a very interesting point. And I think we are probably dealing with the ghosts of critical standards.

Our standards have been built up often in connection with a kind of pedagogy which is often inappropriate for listening to what poets write and may be wholly inappropriate for listening to what children write. Instead of making us think poetry is affected if it is written like prose, this pedagogy makes us think prose would be affected if it were written any other way. "My Teacher" is neither prose nor poetry, but the form Kevin chose is probably more appropriate to it than the prose fashion would be. Punctuation really becomes necessary when you have solid blocks of prose, but you don't really need punctuation here, do you?

Let's look at another example:

THE KITTEN

The sun is waving goodbye to you all.

material removed due to copyright restrictions.

And that is the end of my story about the kitten.[2]

You see, that is set out rather like "My Teacher," only the lines are longer. And it takes that shape simply because each line is a caption to a picture. I think children's way of using the written language, especially at first, is like a string of captions, and not like continuous prose with paragraphs.

I have heard some silly things said about the rules of free verse. T. S. Eliot has said you cannot tackle free verse until you have the ability to write disciplined verse, because free verse is much more difficult. But I also have read D. W. Hard-

[2]From John Dixon, *Growth through English* (Oxford University Press for the National Association for the Teaching of English, 1967), pp. 26-27. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

ing; he finds in Wyatt's verse the forbears of what is now sometimes called free verse, and he simply says that the principle by which this is done is one of setting a sound unit (not a syntactical unit necessarily but a unit that makes a unit of sound) on one line and then putting the next sound unit on the next line.[3] This seems to me to suggest that free verse can be extremely subtly written, because you can have a practised ear for contrasting units of sound, but that it is also simple, because a sense of units of sound is something that comes very early in the things that children *say*. Sound is something they savor; it means something to them that it doesn't to us. We look straight through the sound qualities of words to their meanings, whereas for children words are sounds before anything else. Their speech shows this quality of awareness of sound, of delight in sound which makes this sort of phrasing in free verse, I think, very natural to them.

A short selection was written for a student of mine who was working in a secondary modern school; I can't say this is the nonselective secondary school because its the selected-*out* part of it. The children in these schools are left after they have taken away those who go to the grammar school. It was a very tough job she had on her hands. On one occasion she set them an old stager, "When the Circus Came to Our District," and she got what you might expect, a lot of noise, a lot of bright colors, a lot of confusion, and she got thirty of these that were more or less all alike. But one girl had her own fish to fry, and this is what she wrote on that occasion. She changed the title to "Conversation Overheard on the Bus." She, as I say, comes from a secondary modern school and you will see the relevance of this to the story.

A Conversation Overheard on the Bus

As I was coming home one evening on the bus from school there in front were two children. One was shabby and thin looking and the other tubby and medium looking.

These children were talking about a circus which had come to town which they had been to. The shabby girl's name was Sheila and she thought it was very funny. She liked the little short clowns and the giraffe-necked ladies and thought it was wonderful how all the animals were trained, especially the sea-lions and thought how lovely they looked balancing the balls and for the very first time in a circus she had seen giraffes taking part.

But Anna, the posh, fancy, high-school looking girl had different ideas. She thought it was cruel to keep lions and elephants, polar-bears, grizzly-bears, sea-lions, seals, giraffes and all the other kinds of animals that used to roam on their own round ice-bergs in the sea and the jungle in a cage. She said, "How

[3] D. W. Harding, "Rhythmical Intention in Wyatt's Poetry," *Scrutiny* XIV, No. 2 (1946): 96.

> cruel it is to keep them in cages performing while they could roam. The people that have necklaces round their necks which are called giraffe-necked women who are laughed at, and the short midgets, they can't help it, and I think the circus is a cruel place."
>
> Soon they got off but still hadn't finished. so I don't know what else they said.
>
> (Christine, aged 12)

I don't know this child; I only know the student who is teaching her and the situation in which the task was set and the fact that it came that way. Can we get any further with it? What do you think language is being used for? It is the posh, fancy high school girl who thinks the circus is cruel whereas the other, the one from the secondary modern school, Sheila, thinks it was great fun. Would you expect a twelve-year-old to write this sort of thing?

I think you have the writer herself there twice over. What has she been thinking up till now? Yes, it is fun, I mean, the circus is fabulous. That would be Sheila, the shabby one, the one the writer knows she *fully is*. But the unattained, the possible future (it is not *logically* possible because she won't become a high school girl)—these other possibilities are seen in terms of the posh, fancy high-school girl who thinks differently. Well don't you think it is likely that Christine herself is in fact in two minds? What she has accepted up till now is now being challenged by another newer self, and she has dramatized these two aspects of herself into two girls who have a conversation on the bus. But she doesn't yet know the answer to this conflict and that last line rounds it off just beautifully. "Soon they got off but still hadn't finished, so I don't know what else they said."

It is certainly familiar to me that around this age or a little older, the real conflict between the protectiveness of home and nature "red in teeth and claw" becomes a real conflict, a deep conflict. So it seems to me that this is the sort of writing that you would expect in a child's development around this age, or a little later perhaps. Anyway I can't prove anything about this particular case, but I am sure, in general, children use language for this purpose of coming to terms with their experiences, given the opportunity and provided they aren't told to write about the Peninsular War or something all of the time.

I collected the following piece from one of my daughters and so I know the circumstances of its writing. There is something else I want to say on that. I think that we go back over experiences as a spectator both for fun and from need, and there may well be aspects of both the "for fun" and "from need" in all situations. And mercifully we don't know which predominates at the time. So if we are tempted to do as I think David Holbrook sometimes is tempted to do, and psychoanalyze from the writing, then I think this helps to discourage

us. This was written at the age of nine and it is a beautiful medley of truth and fiction.

THE TREASURES

It was wonderful that I got my treasures at all. It happened like this. I was staying with my aunt, and *her* great aunt suddenly died, and my aunt Winifred got a lot of funny little things, some carved in ivory. She let me choose six, and this is what I chose:—An ivory elephant a red velvet pin-cushion, with a mother-of-pearl back to it, a measuring tape, which came out through a slit in a carved ivory box. To put it back you twiddled a knob on top. Then I chose a minuture wooden spinning wheel, about eight inches high. Then I got a brooch and, from a suitcase, some gorgeous tawny velvet. As that was on the morning of my last day, I packed them carefully, in some tissue paper, and a box which aunt Winifred said I could have.

All the way home, in the bumpy rattling train, I was terrified that they would be smashed. However, when I unpacked in my room at home, I was considerably relieved to find them still unbroken. My younger sister, Anne, was very envious, and grumbled that everything happened to me, because I was the eldest. She went on in this way till I pointed out that last time she went to stay with aunt Winifred she got two dolls, one Welsh and one Swedish. Not that either of us care very much for dolls, being eight and eleven, but these were rather nice ones, dressed in their national costumes. That's the sort of person aunt Winifred is. Whenever you go to stay with her you always come back with twice as much as you came with. But I gave Anne the pin cushion and the measuring tape, as her sewing is much better than mine. The farthest I've got is sewing nametapes, with Georgina Wilkins on them onto my school clothes. But Anne is good at sewing and embroidery. So she was pleased with these, especially the pincushion.

I don't know whether that reads to you terribly prim, does it? Doesn't it sound terribly prim? I mean "Aunt Winifred" and this sort of traveling home on the train and "Georgina Wilkins" and all this—it is all *upgrading* all the time you know, having a cut at being what she certainly is not. On the other hand, there is a lot of this that is real only turned upside down. In fact, she is the older of my two daughters by a couple of years and she was, as you see, nine. And the seven-year-old, Alison, was the one who actually went off for a Sunday, not by train, to another part of London where she visited an old friend of ours who isn't in fact an aunt anyway, but who had had an aunt who died and left her a lot of interesting old things. And what is actually factual here and down to the last detail correct is the description of the gifts. These were the things in question, but they were given to the other girl, the younger girl, and there was a great row and jealousy and difficulty about this and Celia,

the writer, didn't come out of it very well of course. She tried to nag Alison into giving up some of the things and in the end I think Alison gave her something, but everything in the story Celia tells is upside down and inside out. This perhaps just got written in order to have a record somewhere of a better state of affairs than reality.

We use language to go back over an experience and we improvise upon experience. Improvisation usually draws on the raw material of actual experience but reconstitutes it into patterns very different from those of our own actual experiences. As we respond to the murder in *Macbeth*, we extend our experience to some extent into the mind of a murderer. Our writing must all come from our own experience in the end, but it comes from the deep roots or the raw elements of our experience, which have been very diversely selected and very differently reorganized in order for us to extend our experience into that of Macbeth.

I remember once when Celia was about eleven, the age when children are asked to write something for the school magazine. She was asked to write it as her homework. Do you cheat in this way? Well, anyway they set her a homework on writing something for the magazine and she was having trouble over it. She had written a line or so of something and I said, "What are you doing?" She said, "I am writing a poem for the magazine," and I said "What is it about?" She said, "Autumn." And that was that and she went on. Then she came to a real pencil biting situation. I said, "Are you stuck?" so she said, "Yes, I can't think of a rhyme for a leaf." Naturally, a rhyme for leaf. So I tried to be helpful and suggested a few but they weren't any good. I mean they couldn't be used. So I said, "Well really you know, honey, this isn't the way you usually write poems. What do you *want to say* about autumn? Never mind rhyming." So she looked at me with great pity and said, "It's not the highbrow ones that get in, it's the *other* ones." In other words, the school was saying yes, rhymes. Look at this elementary piece of story telling by Celia at six:

> As the day's came nearer Silivia got more and more excieted and the day before it arived her mother bought her some Jodphers and the next day it came.

Very straightforward, yet although you know how to deal with that grammatically, to analyze that is an extremely complex process. She arrived at a construction without any conscious choices almost by listening experience alone and she wrote something which by analysis and selection and ordering presents very great difficulties.

This suggests that there are more direct ways to arrive at the use of language than by the classification and offering of deliberate choice. And this is

what I really believe. What I believe is that the study of language—the analysis —works *against* its effective use at early stages. I can see that it is true of some skills that the ability to bring awareness of modes of operation to bear increases the degree of the skill. I think this is much less true of language than of any other skill we deal with in school. But secondly, and this is really where I do feel firm, I am quite certain that the offering of deliberate choices which have to be understood as parts of a system that has been arrived at by analysis is of no use to anyone who is not able to arrive at them by *his own* analysis of the data. And therefore, with Piaget's and other evidence in view I say, yes, I do want some of this work but I don't want it until about the age of fourteen or fifteen, because it is only then that most children will be able to go through the analytical processes with some hope of succeeding, some hope of doing well enough to arrive at these terms and use them sensibly. And when that does happen, I am quite certain there are aspects of language usage which can be improved by language study.

The work of talker and writer can be helped at that stage by the work of a language *student*. So we want children, then, to be talkers and writers and students. But since from experience we find that by that age they are able to do a very, very great deal with language, we ought to bring in other methods only where it is necessary. I think probably it is necessary in dealing with the more scientific or philosophical uses of language. I want children to meet structures in actual use. I want children to see these structures and have these structures in their ears but not presented in the form of a paradigm, a set from which to make deliberate choices. And I think there is some evidence that they do do that, and we can have faith in the process.

I do believe that the continuous use of language by speaking or writing or listening or reading, the use of continuous language, is the really productive factor in all language work. I am a great believer in the value of *studying* the language but this isn't part of language arts or English teaching. It is a study which is of value for its own sake just as biology is.

I don't think I could suggest anything which would go into a curriculum, as I know a curriculum to be. I think what I would need to do would be to write for the teachers who are going to teach the children and do that as generally as I wished.

I am reminded of a syllabus or as near as we can get to it in England. This is from a secondary school which has just become a comprehensive. It was written by Patricia Creek, a former student in our department, when she was head of the English Department at the Minchenden School, London. I think the way in which she tackles what she does might be a way of very tentatively

suggesting that there are teachers who are able to undertake the process of structuring situations and arranging for learning to take place in what is not complete chaos, and who yet are doing so in what must seem to people who are accustomed to a structured curriculum to be deep water with no life belt or anything else.[4]

> *The purpose of the syllabus.* The syllabus is designed (A) to provide a basis for discussions in the department about our work and the ways we wish to experiment in the future. (B) to help those new to the teaching of English by describing themes and methods which members of our staff have found successful. And (C) to provide an account of the department's approach to its work for anyone outside who is interested.

Then she begins:

> WORK IN ENGLISH
>
> The English classroom is a meeting place to which each pupil comes with his own experience in life, his emotional, intellectual needs and as he grows older his plans for the future. We, the teachers, bring our experience and conception of our duties to the pupil, duty to literature and to the society we hope will exist in the future. And in the classroom there are books which contain endless varieties of experience interpreted and shaped by minds more subtle and sensitive than our own. Teacher and pupil alike learn from books and from each other.

So having begun by describing the classroom as a meeting place, she goes on to say that the classroom is also a *workshop;* pupils need to create, to make something of their own they can feel proud of and so on. "Including and going beyond the concept of a meeting place and workshop, the English classroom is a place to live." To a limited extent this involves firsthand experience. There are real social relationships in the classroom. We fail and succeed. We can look at objects brought in; we can go out on visits. However, most events of life don't happen in classrooms, but we can live them there in our imagination through reading and writing. This is how my student dealt with this fact:

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[4] "Comprehensive Schools: The newest pattern of organization in state-supported British secondary education, attempting to provide for all social classes and levels of ability within one institution. The comprehensive schools are seen as a major equalitarian force in the new social revolution and are the closest of all the British patterns of organization to the typical American high school." James R. Squire and Roger K. Applebee, *Teaching English in the United Kingdom* (Champaign, Ill., National Council of Teachers of English, 1969), p. 254.

> When teachers of most school subjects wonder what to do next, they look at the syllabus. The English teacher on the other hand considers the situation in which he is working and what its possibilities are. For most teachers this will not be a conscious process. As a result of experience, they feel that a particular activity would be successful or is needed by the class. Further as we all tend to use a more restricted range of materials and activities than we might, we need to bear in mind as many as possible of the factors entering into the teaching situation. These other considerations are expanded in the appendix but briefly include (a) the children, the experience they bring with them from life outside lessons, their attitudes and needs, and the sort of group they make together; (b) the school, the books, equipment, and facilities made available; (c) the teacher, his experience, knowledge and personality, and (d) the work done in previous English lessons by pupils and teachers. With these things in mind a teacher can choose the subject matter and kinds of activities.

And then she gives some examples of what they might do.

> Even if one starts with the intention of relating a number of lessons to a theme of say, discipline or authority, it's better to see where students' interests take them than to plan a course rigidly in advance. All work in particular aspects should not be kept apart from other kinds of English. Talk should rather be the matrix, itself varied, from which many specialized uses of language develop. A teacher plans activities that would involve talking, reading, and writing of different kinds, and reviews work already done to see what has been neglected.

This is the kind of planning she is in favor of, and it is not easy to do. And from that point, it really quite honestly is complete free choice for her teachers to do what they want to do in their classrooms. This means that the staff meeting is an essential part of the organization of the work in English in the school. Teachers are also free to pass on the same degree of choice and freedom to the children. A great deal of work is done throughout the school in groups and not as a class. Dramatic work is normally done by self-chosen groups which range in size from two to nine, or ten, or more. And a good deal of that goes on.

If you believe that language can do things for individuals and you believe there is a great deal required to be done by language for every child that comes to school, then you stop looking for practice exercises and dummy runs and begin looking for the real jobs that language ought to do. You are looking for areas of experience in which language can perform something.

Take this limiting (absurd) case: A teacher might say, "My first responsibility is to get this child to use his own language *at the level at which he is*. My first job is at least not to prevent him from using language in the ways he's been using it before he came to school, at the level which he has now

reached." (Of course we add that the child's language is bound to develop with use, and if we keep it operating, keep it doing what it's supposed to be doing for him, it will improve.) If the first thing then is that language has a job to do, shouldn't we look at what it is doing and start to think of how we can plan activities in terms of what it is doing? And is this so "way out" that we can't yet do it, we can only try to do it experimentally?

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The Young Child's Writing

The unique patterns and imagery of children's expression convinced some teachers generations ago that young people are often potential poets. That children have distinct ways of seeing their world and of framing their views in compelling phraseology appears anew whenever teachers invite and support their pupils' fumblings toward poetic insight. Consider the following first exploration in the realm of verse dictated by a seven-year-old girl:

LIGHTNING

Lightning
material removed due to
copyright restriction.
Did he?[1]

Katie, who surprised her teacher with her first poetic statement, had not been outstanding as a contributor in prose. Her stories told to a receptive audience frankly imitated those that her more confident classmates had invented. Only her own small addition or twist of event differentiated Katie's version from its model. Assured however by her classmates' enjoyment and by her teacher's approval, Katie was wholly pleased and ready to try again.

[1]From Alvina T. Burrows, Doris C. Jackson, and Dorothy O. Saunders, *They All Want to Write: Written English in the Elementary School* (New York, 1964), p. 146. This and the following four poems reproduced by permission of the publisher, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

One busy day when many members of the class were dictating poems about the weather, Katie edged closer to her teacher who asked if she had a poem to dictate. Her prompt response was "Lightning," an offering of strength and vigor that showed the individuality in an outwardly conforming little girl. Not all of Katie's subsequent efforts were of this high quality, however. Her next offerings were a kind of doggerel very often presented by children and useful only, it seems, as exercises in fluency. Later in the year, two other poems showed the stuff of which Katie was capable.

The world is like a bakery shop window.

Material removed due to copyright restrictions.

Run, run, run![2]

Writing verse and stories was only a small part of Katie's school experience. Telling "make-up" stories orally as well as "really true" reports, giving informal plays, planning for different kinds of curriculum activities such as trips, displays, programs, and many ways of finding answers to questions; discussing all sorts of interests, singing, painting, playing, dancing—all of these kinds of work rounded out the months of study from which the foregoing and much other writing resulted.

Poetry more than prose first led teachers to sense that children's creativity was worthy of careful nurture. Values of poetic expression to children clearly supersede the obvious ones of pride in the approval of teachers and fellow pupils. Hearing and reading the writings of other children and adults becomes a different process. The pupil who feels that he is a successful author because he has been treated like one need not be defensive. He can be open to the excellence he meets in the work of others. The unique metaphor, the flash of insight, the harmonious play of words met in literature draws a welcoming response from the child who has successfully expressed some feeling all his own, even though his poetic concept and style may be starkly immature. In the complementary

[2] Burrows, Jackson and Saunders, *They All Want to Write*, pp. 146-147.

cycle of writing and listening, the pupil picks up clues that suggest new verbal adventures. He adds to his reservoir of literary experience and in consequence he enriches many facets of personal development. Something of the nature of this inner experience is revealed in the following by a middle grade pupil.

At night when I go to bed

Material removed due to copyright restrictions.

And keep the same adventure.[3]

Sometimes a surprising vigor and thrust are found in children's poetic expression. "A Sword" was written by a fourth grade boy with no regard for alignment but was read to his teacher with a rhythm and voicing that left no doubt as to appropriate line division.

A Sword

A sword has a master

Material removed due to copyright restrictions.

Of the shining handle.[4]

[3] Burrows, Jackson, and Saunders, *They All Want to Write*, p. 125.
[4] Burrows, Jackson and Saunders, *They All Want to Write*, p. 136.

The children who wrote or dictated these poems have enjoyed a rich literary fare and many forms of creative response to the curriculum as a whole. But children with lesser advantages of schooling can begin and can grow when a supportive teacher surrounds them with a stimulating environment. Some fourth graders who had not hitherto had a deeply encouraging school life experimented with *haiku*, a verse form that for all its tightness of pattern offers visible proof that poems can be short. Liberties with syllable count were acceptable; individuality of perception was welcomed.

I

Old Goat, why must you
Baa-baa all morning like this?
Baa-baa another day.

II

O, well filled with gold,
Why don't you open up
And let me come in there?

III

I will rest by the light of the moon
And fall to sleep
And die right there.[5]

In classrooms where verse and stories are dictated, certain common conditions exist: (1) Creativity in many media flourishes. (2) Children are welcomed as individual persons who need to differ from one another. (3) Products of all honest effort are welcomed—not criticized, no matter how benignly or constructively. (4) Stories and poems by pupils are read aloud without correction and rewriting but only for entertainment and enjoyment. (5) All sorts of things both in and out of the prescribed curriculum are talked about with many differing curiosities and feelings emerging.

This free flow of talk among children and teacher not only integrates learning experiences; it also integrates pupils into a community of individuals. Thus

[5]By fourth grade pupils of Mae Armster, Thomasville Public Schools, Thomasville, Georgia.

appreciative conversation and discussion facilitate writing as writing, in turn, facilitates better oral discourse.

Analysis of talking and listening leads to the reaffirmation not only of their contribution to written language but also to the premises germane to oral language in the total elementary school program. It appears that two major tasks of the elementary teacher are *first,* to extend, refine, and enhance oral efficiency that children bring to school, and *second,* to build upon this oral base a complementary efficiency in the use of written symbols. With this perspective, the teacher can harmonize the interplay of writing, reading aloud, discussing and conversing, reading silently, reporting, making up plays, reading chorally and individually. In elementary classrooms, it is the live audience that fosters creative writing.

While poetry production expands and diminishes in cyclical sequences from primary grades through adolescence, story writing also plays a significant role in the rounded development of literary skill. One has only to see a class eager with suspense or chuckling with laughter as they hear a classmate's story to suspect both audience and author are learning. Entertainment may appear to dominate; indeed, entertainment and learning often go hand in hand in literary exploration. The author of the following stories noted the crescendo of merriment over the *National Giraff-o-graphic* and the quality of the family's breakfast conversation.[6] Words twisted into new patterns and the impolite but realistic language quickened both attention and mirth. Action that rarely slackened held the listeners throughout. Story techniques, used perhaps unconsciously, earned responses that heightened awareness of their merit.

Exploring human relations on paper enables the nine- or ten-year-old writer to assert his power. Maneuvering adults into silly situations is a frequent happening in children's stories. Proving the prowess of the young or animal character counterbalances the operation of adult authority. And restoration of the safe, familiar world of parental control occurs often enough to be reassuring.

These child needs appear in a second Giraffe story in which animals are safe masks for all-too-human foibles. One might ponder the frequency of justified punishment in children's stories as well as the overplaying of power roles.

[6]The following pair of stories and their accompanying illustrations from Russell G. Stauffer and Alvina T. Burrows, *American English, Book VI* (New York, 1962), pp. 55-56, 58. Reprinted by permission of Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Stories omitted due to copyright restrictions

Young children, too, whether dictating or writing, or both, display greater freedom when manipulating animal characters, but they also people their stories with ghosts and other supernatural beings, with machines and flowers and clouds or other things "come alive" as well as with human and near-human beings. Of the latter sort was the character of the title role in the following:

THE CROOKED LADY

> Once there lived a crooked lady. She was very sad in her house because she had a crooked house,—and crooked food, crooked furniture, crooked everything. SHE was even crooked. She needed a stick to help her from being crooked. So she looked, and she looked, and she LOOKED. But she could not find one. But she did see a crooked stick and she said, "How will that help me from being crooked? That will just make me become more crookeder."
>
> So finally she found a straight stick, and from that time on she was very happy because everything was just right. Her house was not crooked; nothing was crooked. But if she let go of that stick once, everything would be crooked and she would not be happy again. She didn't even let go of it when she was in BED.
>
> The End[7]

That the lead character revealed only a single dimension of personality bothered the second grade audience not at all. Nor did the confusion about whether the original search for a stick should be for a straight or a crooked one to apply the proper magic to the lady's dilemma. There was action, a happy solution to a problem, and a mounting sense of intensity as the plot moved to its conclusion. For both writer and audience of early years, this is enough story and character structure, apparently, to be satisfying entertainment. Spelling has been corrected in this published version, but in class, no improvement upon the first draft's presentation of *crookit*, *furnicher*, and *sterate* was needed since the story was read aloud and privately filed. Publication demands of correctness were irrelevant.

Helping the weak, the inept, and the unfortunate to security, if not to triumph, is an age-old theme. Here it is again as it cheered a third grade writer and his eager audience.

[7] By a pupil of Dorothy O. Saunders, Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland.

A Happy Pumpkin

There once was a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch. It was little and orange. It was lonely. One day a little girl saw it and picked it. It was happy now. One afternoon it was made into a Jack-o-Lantern. It was put outside on the porch. It was chilly. When Halloween came a candle was lit, and it made the Jack-o-Lantern warm and happy.

The End[8]

Two questions about children's writing arise so often as to merit respectful and specific replies. The first relates to productivity: *How do you get children to write, to want to write, and to keep on writing?* The second is its natural pedagogical counterpart: *How do you teach children correct English mechanics without restraining their free and far ranging originality?*

Several answers to the first question are these: (1) Encourage creative efforts in many media, not only in words. (2) Show each child that you welcome his uniqueness. Within this spirit, many techniques are productive. (3) Find occasions for reading stories dictated or written by other children. (4) Have many story-making sessions in which individuals tell their own "make-up stories." Often such periods are brief; only a few minutes given to delight in imagination are enough to whet appetites for more. (5) At times, suggest building upon a story begun by someone else, inventing a new ending or adding a character who reshapes some action in the original. Some of these attempts may evolve into a kind of serial story telling session. Children can often make up new adventures for established characters such as folk heroes known in old tales or newly created space heroes. Inventing adventures, both brave and mischievous ones, for story-book pets, for real pets, for wished-for pets always moves some children into the dynamics of creativity.

In these oral story-making meetings, the teacher can at times jot down in her self-made abbreviation system several offerings as they tumble out. Or she can turn on the tape recorder and later type and post those that she managed to preserve. Available in a folder for reading and rereading, such originals spark further dictating and writing.

From such apparently casual and non-threatening story-making situations, the teacher can move to more obviously planned periods for dictating. In spite of the convenience and popularity of the mechanical recorder, most children cherish the opportunity to dictate their stories to their teacher. The responsive look, the

[8] By a pupil of Dorothy O. Saunders, Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland.

warm smile and approving nod strengthen the author without a word being spoken. Never long enough, such dictating periods even in upper grades are themselves an incentive not only of the moment but also for later independent writing. Of course some children, as soon as they have acquired a bit of manual proficiency, prefer to write entirely on their own. They should be encouraged to continue. Some will write a part of their verse or story as they await their turn to dictate. All sorts of combinations of these arrangements should be tried.

Even when only a few children in a class have got started at story production, sharing their products with the others rarely fails to excite more children to start. Comment in such audience situations is limited to what hearers like: a funny name, a sudden surprise, a mysterious hint, live conversation, a "good sounding" phrase. Negation is omitted; indeed, negation is plainly prevented. Telling what is wrong with a story is too easy to waste time on. Looking for what one enjoys sharpens attention to what makes stories good and hence, how to write better.

Techniques of stimulation help those pupils who have become frightened or self-conscious. Children who have never learned these enemies of spontaneity need little except the continued assurance of a responsive audience. They will write or tell stories in waves of creativity separated by periods of non-productivity. No pattern of a story per week or any other kind of regular assignment can be applied. Indeed, only harm can come from such artificial requirements.

Stories once read aloud have served their purpose. They have entered the cycle of communication. They are not exercises to be corrected, scored, rewritten or graded. (NEVER graded! Who can grade imagination, especially that of a young child with a lifetime of growing to do?) The story, a segment of imagination committed to paper, has done its important work when it has brought writer and listener together in a meeting of minds. The piece of paper, with its usually poor penmanship and unconventional punctuation, needs only to be filed for future reference if wanted. In some rare instances, it might be brought out of private quarters to be edited and typed or hand written neatly for a class book or for a gift to a friend or relative. But these needs for publication are rare. Short of being made public, the paper remains the writer's private property. Its neatness and spelling are no one's concern.

The second question, that of *learning correctness,* becomes pertinent at this point. Children need to use the conventions of their language to avert social condemnation if for no other reason. But the better reasons of clarity and pride in workmanship are much more fortifying motives. There is a realm of written communication wherein correct form can be learned with moderate economy. This is the writing which must meet the public eye and which needs to be read

rather than heard. Usually, though not always, it is the writing of an informational character, designed to inform, to persuade, to convince or simply to record. Two terms help to categorize writing that performs this function: practical writing and what A. B. Clegg, in *The Excitement of Writing*, calls "recording writing."

Neither term is completely satisfactory, however. Nor is the term *public* writing in contrast to imaginative or *private* writing, because stories and other imaginative expression can be shared by oral rendition or by display or by multiple reproduction. Although all classifications at this time spill over, they have the value of emphasizing function and appropriate treatment. For purposes of learning and teaching, the category of practical writing has much to offer and can be readily illustrated.

Reports, letters, posters, some memoranda, and notes are plainly designed to be read. They must be true, clear, readable. In their visual forms they are person-to-person communication without intermediary vocal rendition. Children can understand the necessity for correcting and often of rewriting such serviceable items. In primary grades, a "good copy" for one or for many readers is achieved by first dictating the content to the teacher. A beginner may sign his name and date and add an explanatory picture. Soon he learns to copy part of his message or explanation in his own writing, stopping short of exhaustion. The rest he may do after resting, or it may be done by an older pupil or by the teacher. As individuals gain dexterity, they take pride in completely copying the messages they had dictated so the entire paper is theirs.

Middle and upper graders and some facile younger pupils plan their reports or letters after gathering needed information. They write what they know is a first draft to be edited with the teacher or with a pupil editor. Doing this in a face-to-face supportive climate is much more effective than merely getting back a corrected rough draft. But in either case, the writer should read aloud his corrected version preferably to a working companion. Hearing how it sounds at this stage is important. Some addition or change may st ome to mind. Questions about the correction may be helpful. Hearing where ry sentence ends helps children to match terminal punctuation with terminal voicing. So far does oral-aural skill still outdistance writing skill that its contribution should be exploited when the learner is most responsive. Because of his pride in his own production, his power in oral syntax can merge with power in written syntax if thoughtfully encouraged.

When papers in good form are mounted and displayed and appre d by one's peers, satisfaction is engendered in the very learnings that we have long tried to impose. Exhibition or "publication" of practical writings is a far different experience from the conventional mounting on a bulletin board of corrected and revised first drafts complete with teachers' comments and grades! Such ex-

posure leads usually to embarrassment for the pupils who most need self confidence. The viewing of one's work in attractive form, often illustrated or related to exhibits of models or other objects, is a powerful builder of further energies for writing.

If practice in revision and mechanical correction is confined to the kinds of writing based on objective and external data, then writing of verses and stories, which *need not* be put into correct form, can be kept free of needless drudgery.

The purpose of the hard work to put the first draft of a letter or report into good form that will be seen and read is clear to the author and is generally accepted as necessary to purpose and product. Thus the freedom of personal imaginative writing is protected and balanced by the discipline of objective and public writing. Not only are the differences between these separate but related forms of expression clarified, but the craft of composition is strengthened by the distinctive treatments.

A resurgence of interest in children's writing is clearly in the making. Several signals point toward this conclusion. One such sign is the appearance in the tradebook field of several collections of children's prose and verse. Earlier publication of their writing except for occasional magazine articles, has been limited largely to professional areas. A further indication is that the current general attention to creativity includes a healthy consideration of children's as well as adults' performance. Both of these kinds of evidence suggest a recovery from the panic engendered by Sputnik. A decade of grim concern for test scores and for "beefing up" the curriculum has demonstrated that children need more than factual learnings and so-called academic skills. Though some schools manifestly needed to attend to the substance of their programs, the imbalance that often resulted has brought about neither zeal for learning nor joy in accomplishment. Rather, such pressures have engendered in some pupils an ever narrower competition and in others the determination to take the easiest route through school or to drop out as soon as possible. Neither of these responses is wholesomely productive.

Both the academically privileged as well as those children hitherto confined to "disadvantaged" school communities have shown they profit from creative ex[illegible]. Discovery in the arts almost inevitably begets self discovery. To complement the academic e[illegible] of the curriculum with the stimulus and satisfaction of creative enterprise can bring a new sense of excitement as well as new achievement to American schools.

RICHARD LEWIS has captured the honesty, simplicity and beauty of children's writing in anthologies, as well as on radio and television programs and phonograph records. To prepare *Miracles,* he collected poetry in eighteen English-speaking countries, lecturing at the same time under UNESCO sponsorship. His *Out of the Earth I Sing* comprises poetry and songs of primitive peoples; *The Moment of Wonder* and *In a Spring Garden* present Oriental poetry; *Still Waters of the Air* consists of modern Spanish poetry. Besides teaching, Lewis has been a music critic and editor. He now teachers writing and dramatics at the Manhattan Country School, writing and creativity for adults at the New School for Social Research. He is founder-director of the Touchstone Center for Children, and also directs its Touchstone Players.

A Vital Experience

I feel very deeply that the heart of some of the problems in our society is the way we approach human beings within a classroom.

We have to show this generation of children that the arts are the expression of human dignity, human growth and human consciousness. We cannot do that if we simply allow any concept concerned with expression of a child's own feeling to be peripheral to the curriculum.

The most important question of education: What do you feel? *What do you feel?*

I have often gone into a classroom and read poems and afterwards children will come up to me and say: "Gee, you show so much feeling when you read." They can't understand how I can show so much feeling "in public." My answer to that problem is until we can show children that feeling is a legitimate way of behaving, there is going to be a definite lack of respect for feeling in individuals as well as for anything that would express feeling whether it be poetry, dance or anything else.

There is nothing in the curriculum called "feelings." I doubt if there will ever be. This is why the curriculum has to be changed—radically changed, so that there is not just a peripheral place for feelings via a limited use of the arts, but a very substantial place in which the concern for feelings is evident throughout the day.

I think we have to train teachers to get away from theory and get closer to themselves, because no matter who the person is, if he or she goes into the class-

room and does not recognize the validity of his own feelings and ideas, then he is just going to reflect negatively in terms of the teaching that goes on in that classroom.

At this point I think 99 percent of what children are getting in schools today has nothing to do with the experience of the imagination. Children are being pressured in pressurized cookers and the moments of silence, the moments of relaxation, the moments of solitude so vital to any source of creative work are by and large completely lacking in education.

We are a measuring nation. We like to have results. We measure our progress by results. You cannot measure the results of the spirit.

We have to get over the notion that only the highly intelligent are the creative. All children are creative.

We have made poetry a distant thing. We have made the whole sense of what is creative distant to children, and yet it is the closest thing to them.

If a poem works, it works no matter what the age of the author.

Until we allow the arts to be as hopefully fulfilling as they are for adults, then it is going to be a useless and senseless task to even present children with the concept of writing as an expression.

There are some children who have never written a sentence that has been meaningful to them. Suddenly a sentence will come along about a child's own idea or feeling, and for him, this is a tremendous victory. We should, as teachers, recognize the fact that he has begun to use language as a means of expressing what is important to him.

Children have their own culture. Let us respect that culture. It is a very complicated culture. Let us respect those complications.

My general approach, in working with teachers, is to bring the teacher back as much as I can to the experiences of his own childhood . . . and to begin to see what the experience of a child is in terms of his imagination. We will do all kinds of things that will shock the imagination back into its vitality as well as recognize the very vitality that a child's imagination has, to begin with.

We have to get to the point where children write for themselves, where they realize that what they have to say is important enough so that it is satisfying to themselves.

Children have a great deal on their minds today, a great deal which is reflective of our society, of our culture, and of the mood of our time. It is up to us, as adults, to allow them to say what is on their minds. What they are going to say is not going to be "pretty." We cannot allow children to think that writing is that which must be "pretty." I think too often we give children the impression that we are looking for "beauty" in their writing. We don't give them the impression that we are looking for something that is genuinely their own voice.

Children should write about everything. There should be no subject matter banned to them.

Some children's thoughts are such small fragments. Sometimes we often lose sight of them. Do not lose sight of them though, because they are the very beginnings of consciousness, the very beginnings of the child's realizing who and what he is.

I try to avoid talking to children about techniques. I believe children have the ability to absorb forms and techniques, as well as an enormous capacity to create their own forms and their own techniques.

We try to push the child to say more than he wants to say and this is where we touch upon the anticreative aspect of teaching. We destroy rather than help. Children should begin to see and realize that what they have to say is important no matter what the length or what the idea might be.

The only way you are going to get the child to tell you what he thinks is to literally learn the art of shutting up. Give him a chance to speak. Give him a chance to say exactly what is on his mind.

I will only reinforce my remarks by saying that the word in Eskimo for poetry is also the word which means "to breathe."

Potpourri on Writing

Several sessions were devoted to panel discussions and to question and answer periods at each of the institutes on "Explorations in Children's Writing" in Dallas and Philadelphia. These became a way of extending and clarifying ideas which had been mentioned in the presentations by the speakers or of further explaining questions raised by the participants in conversations with the speakers and staff. Some of the discussions explore the nature of the process whereby children write. Others illustrate concerns for planning and selecting effective learning situations for children. Replies to some of the questions provide a further understanding of the philosophy of James Britton and his view of the British classroom today. Responses by other speakers to some questions have also been included when these help to explain children's writing and techniques for classroom instruction. The comments and questions posed by the director, Eldonna L. Everitts, have been condensed or restated. The marginal notes are designed to help the reader locate topics which might be of particular interest.

EVERTTS: We have investigated the relationship of talking and writing and a new approach for many of us in America for unfolding skills in these areas. At times this approach challenged our most cherished beliefs regarding composition. This had led us to further inquiry regarding language development, the role of literature and its relationship to composition, the planning of learning experiences and the value of curricula, to name only a few areas of concern.

It might be helpful at this point to clarify the meaning of some of the terms we hear frequently and to learn how this trend in writing came about in British education. Mr. Britton, will you begin by giving us an explanation of the comparison between the British school system and ours in terms of what is meant by the British expression "forms"?

BRITTON: School starting age is five, and the infant school is from five to seven. After two years of infant school comes junior school, from seven to eleven. But often the infants and juniors are in fact simply departments of the same school. The child may stay from five to eleven, or from seven to eleven. Nursery school, from three to five years, is optional, and the starting point varies with the school. In other words, local authorities are entitled to set up nursery schools, but this is not compulsory, and therefore when there are economies, this is one of the ways of cutting expenditure. As a result, we are very badly off at the moment for nursery schools. The size of the schools, I think, varies less at home than it does here, especially at the primary school level. (Primary school means infant plus junior—infant, five to seven; junior seven to eleven—and together they make primary schools.)

British school organization

The Plowden Report, which you may have heard about, is a report on the whole of the primary school. Most primary schools in city areas are two- or three-form schools; that is, they have two classes or three classes, at each year level. That means anywhere from 80 to 120 children coming in each year. Each of those classes is a form. Don't ask me why. The "third form" and the "fourth form" is the usual name for it in the secondary school and it's fairly generally used now. It used to be called a grade, in the primary school, but now it's called a form or a class. In other words, a junior school, if it is a three-form intake, has three groups of seven-year-olds, three of eight-year-olds, three of nine-year-olds and so on.

EVERTTS: We have heard of the "eleven plus" examination which is given when students are about eleven years old, to determine whether they go on to academic or vocational education. What is the current status of this examination?

BRITTON: It has officially been done away with, but like so many of these—you know—obituary notices, it isn't always entirely accurate. In some areas, although it has been officially done away with, they've found ways of getting around it in order to have some sort of testing. But in the good areas, the best areas, there is in fact now no eleven plus.

EVERTTS: Will you give us a brief explanation and some background of the Plowden Report?

BRITTON: John Cutforth's pamphlet, *English in the Primary School,* distributed by NCTE, is from the National Association for the Teaching of English (which is the NCTE's very small new counterpart in England) and they were one of the bodies giving evidence to the Plowden Committee. The Plowden Committee was a committee appointed by the government under the chairmanship of Lady Bridget Plowden. But lots of bodies were asked to give evidence to them and this is the evidence NATE submitted. The pamphlet is not really an account

of the Plowden Report, but it is in some ways more valuable, because there are an awful lot of things in the Plowden Report, as one would inherit in a government report, which are more conservative than this document from NATE. On the other hand, we were very pleased with the Plowden Report in general, and it's the first official document which has included the ideas of Piaget, and the general philosophy—or theory, if you like—of the infant school tradition, if I may call it that, in England. This is the first official document to give these views as official views. To have Piaget's developmental sequence given as the representative view of the schools of England was a very good thing indeed.

They made one very fatal mistake, I think, in the Plowden Report. Having gone through all these ideas about the need for individual activities—having done all that—when it came to deal with the curriculum, of all things, they then dealt with it subject by subject, and came up with silly remarks such as how drama is closely related to English. I mean, if you know anything about primary schools in England this is a very silly remark. English doesn't exist, drama doesn't exist; it's just a lot of things going on, and a great many of them involve improvised drama. A lot goes on that concerns language, and that's about as far as you can go in identifying drama on the one hand and English on the other.

If I may add one thing, the infant school tradition began with a happy succession of accidents in the way of influences on the infant schools. A woman named Susan Isaacs—some of you may have heard of her—was a very powerful influence on the infant school. Two books of hers, *Intellectual Growth in Young Children* and *Social Development in Young Children*, although they are now fifteen or twenty years old, are still ahead in their thinking. For a variety of reasons the infant school became really the pride of the system. Now that influence has spread upward through the junior schools.

Infant schools

There is also something I think you hear more about in America, and that's the grammar school tradition: university-directed work and often very high level work, certainly flowering into some very admirable things in the sixth form, which is the university-directed class at the top end of the school. But as it works down the school, the grammar school tradition comes to a head-on collision with the infant school tradition working up the age range. So we're now in a very curious position. The Plowden Report has suggested a change in the age divisions, so that we're going to have some experimental schools, called middle schools, which begin at thirteen or twelve and continue up to fifteen or sixteen. In different areas we have the dominance of the grammar school tradition working down, so we are likely to have two different kinds of middle schools in different areas, one

Two distinct traditions

which will be like the secondary schools, pushed down a bit, the other like the junior schools pushed up a bit.

Sir Alec Clegg, the Director of Education of West Riding of Yorkshire and one of our most enlightened administrators, gave a broadcast talk not long ago about the middle schools. He talked about the academic tradition as "knowledge peddling." He suggests that knowledge peddling (which is not a very polite way of talking about the grammar school tradition) had very little meaning in terms of the sort of thing that went on in the junior schools.

I think you are familiar with the sort of thing that goes on in the junior schools: the "integrated day," "activity methods," the "child-centered curriculum," —all sorts of stereotypes and banner words. But behind it all is a very real change in our educational system at the lower end of the scale. So it is fairly general now in about half our junior schools to find practically no timetable.

New classroom timetable

I think the nicest timetable I know is in a junior school in England where there are two items on the class timetable. One is called "my time" and the other is called "your time" and even the division between your time and my time is highly flexible and is frequently interrupted by things that happen outside the school altogether: a great deal of visiting out in the area and going off for the week, sometimes to a country camp school, or very often going off for a day to visit historic buildings or going off a day or half a day to see people in the area, to meet people and see processes and visit places where things happen. And within the classroom in "your time," everybody working on his own or in small groups of two or three, chosen by themselves, doing what they've chosen to do, but working in a classroom which is full of things to do, full of things that have been done, full of things that are there to do, full of materials with which to do things.

EVERTTS: Would you comment further on the more recent change in focus given to writing activities in British schools?

BRITTON: I'm not really sure I can. I'm running up against this different way of looking at it also. At times there will be some kind of writing activity going on for a very great deal of the day. So it's very difficult to say how much writing goes on—for one child it may have been a great deal of writing and it may well be that for some children there wasn't much writing.

It would be easier for the teacher to deal with a regular schedule. When there isn't one, it does become a matter of very great care on the part of the teacher to have a sense of what all the children are doing. She needs to keep records of what she finds, to get everybody to do a bit of reading every day,

and to have some sort of sense of how much writing all the children are doing so that she can, in fact, see that they don't miss out entirely. On the other hand, a teacher who is really able to bear this kind of work may do better in the long run than others. In other words some teachers are really able to work it, and able to wait a lot longer than other teachers will wait for results. One headmaster told me about his experiences in teaching a class where two children would do absolutely nothing except draw horses. They drew horses very badly but went on drawing horses. Every day they drew horses. I think in the case of one of the boys, he waited practically half that year before he got onto anything but drawing horses; but it was through this drawing of horses that anything else at all came.

Teaching without set schedule

I know one other example of a boy who was extremely backward at everything, except he had a very good sense of movement and he liked his body movement lesson. At his school in West Riding, every class teacher takes movement with his own class and movement means something very special. Is the Laban school of movement something you know about? It's something that the English teacher in the elementary school needs to come to grips with. Movement, drama, and language interact with each other for young children; movement is a sort of early expressive language for them. It certainly was for this boy. He had no other means of expression, but in the course of two or three years' work, this movement brought him to make a book about movement in which he just wrote down his enthusiasms and drew pictures of movement—of things to do, things to act, stories to play out. It was a very, very good piece of writing but it took him about four times as long as you might have supposed it would if you just saw it.

The rate at which children develop varies very much indeed, and so do the amounts and different kinds of activities they cover. If you spend a day in the ordinary junior schools, you will have a lot of children bringing things to read to you that they've written throughout the course of the day. Among the poems I have collected is one which was a third attempt on the part of an eight-year-old girl to write what she wanted to write. Or rather to say what she wanted to say, because her first attempt was a story she told to the whole class—a story about an old tree and a little girl. During the course of the day, she wrote this down in a sort of story and at the end of the day she brought me something she just called "Song." This was the final version of that day's work on the old tree and the girl. Such activity is highly worthwhile.

I don't think I can say how much writing is done. But certainly there will be a lot of writing. It will often be about the children's own experience of one

Writing about experiences

sort or another—and by their own experience I mean their own fantasies, or fairy stories, or magic stories—as well as about things that happened at home. And there'll be no writing among the younger pupils that you could really call expository, although you will see signs of it moving that way.

One last example of what I mean by moving that way. I went into one class of seven-year-olds where the teacher had a nature book and a number book in which the children wrote what they wanted to write whenever they wanted to. They had been for a walk one autumn day and the one small boy had come back and written in the number book, "The dew on the cobweb is the smallest thing I have ever seen." And this was approved as an appropriate entry in the number book, I'm glad to say.

EVERTTS: Since the Dartmouth Seminar, what similarities or differences have you noticed in British and American thinking about the teaching of English?

BRITTON: I think the main thing to me is the tremendous consolidation of ways in which people think. In other countries, there have been so many

Effect of Dartmouth Seminar

people putting a lot of energy into thinking about the teaching of English, theoretically and practically, trying to develop the kind of framework within which teachers of all kinds can try out ideas and check them against their own experience. To me, it isn't enough simply for the teacher to be a good teacher in his situation, or a possible influence over other teachers. He needs to be consolidating what he does with the rest of the theoretical framework at the same time.

I don't want to make it sound too dramatic, but there was in England at the time of the Dartmouth Seminar a consensus, a dialogue and interchange of ideas, which was gaining some headway. And there's no doubt at all that the thinking of the people I have in mind was very, very much affected by meeting people from quite different educational situations when we came here to America, and that the kind of influence that was given by that dialogue is still very strong. I think it will grow stronger. In other words, the seminar assisted in the development of a framework which is not only satisfying to ourselves but also powerful to other people. So its effect spreads to more people's practice more quickly. I think the development of that framework has become in a sense a common task rather than one carried out separately by people in separate countries. I thought Albert Marckwardt made a useful suggestion when he said we needed now to see what peoples of other countries do in teaching their own mother tongue. So far, we've had English speaking

people talking about teaching English to English speaking people, and we need to broaden the basis of our thinking by finding out how French people teach French to French children and so on.

Now I certainly know of one organizational difference between our two countries that interested me. When we came here we saw that you had got your college professors—your subject people in the universities—very much more with their feet wet in the schools and the educational problems of schools than we have. With us, the function of the university people tends to be to act as examiners in the public examinations. Different universities run different examining boards and you see that as a main function of the university professors with regard to the schools. This can be very harmful, because if they perform that function in the schools without being interested in what goes on in the schools or in learning in school, then the examination can be very harmful. So what we are trying to do now—and it's beginning to show some success—is to get our university people alongside our school people in rather the way we found it happens in America.

Help from universities

EVERTTS: Goals for classroom organization were developed at the Dartmouth Seminar. What kind of classroom organization can the teacher develop to achieve these goals?

BRITTON: It seems to me that there is the real argument against the subject separation that you were talking about awhile back. I think because children are developing individual interests, it may not always be enough for the teacher to be the sort of person who simply is expert in finding out. That is enough if time is sufficient. But it is also an economy to be able to refer the child whose interests take him a long way in some scientific subject to someone who is a science expert instead of a composition expert. But if some way can be found of pooling resources in a school in such a way that this is possible without sacrificing the class-teaching situation, then we can preserve the advantages that the class-teaching situation offers: continuity, the complete relationship with one person, but more still, the complete integration of all the work as parts of one child's curiosity. This seems to be very valuable.

EVERTTS: Earlier in our discussion you mentioned movement. As I recall you also mentioned that in the Plowden Report there was an artificial demarcation between drama and English. Perhaps you could expand on this subject and discuss the place of movement and dramatic work in the elementary school in England.

BRITTON: This certainly was a Dartmouth Seminar issue, and I think probably it's the issue in which there was most disparity in practice between schools in America and schools in England. One of the enlightened parts of

Drama in British schools

England is the West Riding of Yorkshire, where there has been a real campaign in the last ten or fifteen years to equip the elementary school teachers in number work, movement, and language. The movement and language become a central core to the whole activity pattern of the class. All teachers in the West Riding Schools are encouraged to take their own movement work with their own classes. This leads straight to language, but it is language as most accessible to children, because it is language embedded in its situation. Not only language about things, but language in a reenactment of the things it's about. It's one degree less abstract than a story. It becomes therefore, a very powerful means of exploration through imaginative reenactment. That's a dignified term for what may be simply play in the corner with the "Wendy House." (The Wendy House is a twee name that we've got in England for a sort of model house in one corner of the classroom. It is just one room, small size, with things children can use to play at mothers and fathers and other games of that kind. The kids are in there whenever they want to be in there and something is always happening there. This is in the younger classes.) This leads on to creative dramatic work and, sometimes, from that to highly stylized improvised drama. In other words, improvised drama is an activity for children who have reached the ability to "compose" in spontaneous speech and action.

EVERTTS: A very essential point to me is the place of children's literature in the experience of the individual child. By this I mean not the intellectualizing about a selection but the enjoyment of the selection for itself—finding satisfaction in the story. Literature should not exist apart from daily life for even the youngest child, but should be relevant to his experience and, of course, imagination and creativity are part of this experience, just as they are in drama. We all know that the child delights in hearing the same verse or tale over and over. The words and their sounds bring delight; knowing previously how the story ends appears to be of little consequence. Thus, for example, literature offers one way to explore language. It can be the central core of many activities. Mr. Britton, how do you feel about this?

Literature for enjoyment

BRITTON: There is danger of isolating literature from the experience which literature must be made relevant to. I believe that with young children, the ability to arrive at the point where literature is experienced does rely upon establishment of a very close connection between a child's talk and actual things, not symbolized, not represented, but actual first-hand experience of town and country, of hot and cold, of people and animals, and so on. I think if you look at the whole of the role of language in learning, you can look at it in this way.

Experience, literature interrelated

The young child before he comes to school has an all-round-looking curiosity. When he comes to school and works through the school, the all-round-looking curiosity gets segmented. There are certain areas in which he has been curious, in which society has also been curious and which society has formalized, organized its curiosity. So we now have a subject of chemistry and a subject of history. The areas of his curiosity become channeled into school subjects which reflect society's systematically codified experience.

But our English isn't one of those areas of systematically codified experience. You can, if you like, now say yes, it is. It is literature. There is literature; it is there just as codified experience, just as geography is there. But I don't take that view. I want to go at it slightly more indirectly.

I think that what the work in English must do is to look after the areas of experience and the areas of curiosity which are there with the child beforehand, but which are not now channeled into these school subjects. There's a whole lot left. What is left that the child is curious about, which is not covered by geography, history, or science, is, above all, the experiences in which children differ from each other. The experiences that involve their feelings about their mothers and fathers, their homes, and about people in general–these unique, individual, personal experiences.

Now I am using the word "structured." I think language is used to structure experience, and that in geography and history in certain special ways, language is being used to structure experience into more systematic goals. But nobody is going to be structuring personal experience (systematically, wholly, concentratingly). This I think means that we teachers of English have a theater of operations just as the geographer has–a theater of operations which is the personal experiences of children.

Our role probably is to get language to bear upon those experiences, and as we do so we find two surprising things. I think, without knowing why they are doing it, teachers have always done this. Teachers for generations have had children talking and writing about their lives and about themselves. If these children stopped to ask, "What am I doing?" they would say, "I'm doing English." And secondly, the whole operational area of literature is exactly that area of personal experience. So I don't want to say we are doing what we are doing because literature is there. But the very important discovery is that what we are doing is what we literally have been doing without literature.

So I want to support the tenor of what you're saying when you say, "This is the center," the other things will be coming around, will be added onto it. Look out for this and you'll get the others.

EVERTTS: Certainly as literature becomes the center of things, the child has many opportunities to hear and use language in action. Now we know that a knowledge of traditional grammar isn't much help either in using language or in writing. But what about the value of the new grammar? Can it help?

BRITTON: In England we have a slightly different situation in regard to grammar. The old grammar lay on our hands for a very long time and became more and more discredited, because there was some very powerful research (some of it done in my own university) which proved to teachers, where they could take the message, that it wasn't doing anything practical for them. There was nothing to put in its place at that stage, and I think this is where we differ from you. A great many schools have dropped it and have just done nothing whatsoever about it over a long period of years. So we've been turning out the finished product of the high schools able to read and write and speak as well as we would expect them to do, fulfilling our hopes in this respect, and we know they've had absolutely no help from grammatical study. It is a matter of the *use* of language as distinct from the *study* of language.

Dropping old grammar

BURROWS: The study of language might be useful and interesting for its own sake for some children who are psychologically ready for that kind of learning. But as yet, we have no evidence of that. It would take a long time to gather the evidence.

EVERTTS: But what about the role of grammar in writing?

BRITTON: I think there is a great deal of evidence now that the study of language is only very, very loosely related to the ability to *use* the language. So you have to ask yourself the question, what are you after with the children? What is it that you want them to do? Do you really want them to use the language to the best of their ability for all the multiple purposes for which language is of value to them? If that is so, then you don't, at that stage, worry about grammar at all, because it has been proved to have no real significance in that process.

Language: to use or to study?

BURROWS: Recent investigations have shown a higher correlation between abilities to master knowledge of grammatical principles and arithmetic problem solving than between grammatical knowledge and ability in reading and writing. But the belief that reading and writing can be improved by studying grammar has been held since the twenties, and I am sure it will live on after we are gone. In school, I had to learn all the names of all the bones in the body correctly. I have forgotten most of that now, fortunately. But it didn't make me walk a bit differently, nor did it affect my diet so that I might build stronger bones. It was

knowledge about something, not translated into skill at all, and I don't think it could be. Learning the names of the bones in the body or the names of the parts of speech of words are much alike; saying words about something is not evidence of full understanding.

As far as writing is concerned, change certainly takes place gradually. We start with speech, obviously. The child is usually fluent in speech before he starts to write, and this gives him the resources with which to write. So he begins with a general, all-purpose kind of writing which is in fact written-down speech. And he develops more and more abilities in the face of more and more demands—differing demands, in response to which he differentiates. There is a dissociation from that one ability to a variety of abilities in accordance with the variety of demands that are accepted by the child. We are thinking mainly of demands in learning science and learning geography and history. If in English time, or as an English teacher, you start saying, "What do I do about the language here?" you emphasize the wrong aspect. Don't do it from the point of view of language; do it from the point of view of learning of the materials, which will be like the geography work and the history work and so on. And that makes the demand to which the child adapts his language with your help.

EVERTTS: Preschool children demonstrate a knowledge of grammar in their daily conversation. This would indicate that some of the most efficient learning is not carefully planned or sequenced in advance. Recent investigations have shown that the young child has a wonderful grasp of language by the time he enters school. For the larger part, this was obtained through living in a home where talk between family members or perhaps the extended family group was common. Common also was much small talk between older persons and the child, even before the child could respond in controlled sounds. Those of us who have had the opportunity to observe even a small baby respond with his entire body—laughing, clapping, kicking—know that this early response represents gratification from language and even an expectation of more. The toddler certainly loves to explore language and to try out new words and phrases, in ways that sometimes resemble foreign language practice as carried on in class.

Individuality of language learning

BRITTON: An individual learns his mother tongue in accordance with his own individual purposes. His skill in his mother tongue in the end is different from other people's because it is a skill which continues to serve the purposes of somebody who is different from everybody else. Mastery of the mother tongue leads to a highly individual *destination*, but what is more, the route is also highly individual. So although there is a great deal of commonality in our mastery of the tongue that we share, the ways we arrive at what is common may even then

be highly differentiated. Now in circumstances of that kind I just don't see how you can plan a curriculum in terms of skills, levels of skill to be achieved at certain points.

EVERTTS: You have just pointed out that a sequential planned program might be less a factor in planning learning experience than we have believed, especially in language learning. Dr. Burrows, is there a sequence for the development of writing?

BURROWS: It is very easy to oversimplify on this. There are some schools which build a sequence: in third and fourth grade you write one paragraph, in the fifth and sixth grade you write two, in junior high school you write three or more. This is, of course, ridiculous because there is nothing harder to write than one paragraph, to say something and say it well. This is purely on a quantitative basis which is not the real way of building a sequence. I am terribly afraid of setting up sequences that are psychologically unsound.

Unsound curriculum sequences

EVERTTS: Although the pattern for the development of linguistic competency may be essentially alike for individuals, each selects from his environment those experiences which have present value to him and at the same time ignores other experiences because they hold no present meaning. Each one's experience is unique. It is through this language experience that the child gains his first sense of control over his environment. From infant crying he progresses to words, reflecting minute differences in meaning. It seems to me that having extensive vocabularies for listening, speaking, reading, and writing will help the child to express himself more clearly and, incidentally, to think more accurately.

BRITTON: The effects of language working upon the personal experience in the children's own worlds is also a fact to be looked after. Vocabulary, I think, is a dangerous word if we talk of vocabulary as a linguistic resource or reservoir which can be a big reservoir or a small reservoir. And we've admitted there are different areas of this reservoir. There's the passive area which is larger than the active area, so you've got a sort of inner reservoir and outer reservoir.

But I don't think reservoir is the best image for this. You want to think of a flow, you know, a stream. Language is, above all, utterance. Language is alive; when it is continuous and being uttered, there's a flow. So if you look after the flow, you are looking after how words are being used. If you think of the reservoir, you can think of dictionaries. If you think of the flow, you can think of what you can use words to mean. Now dictionaries don't tell you what you can use words to mean; they only tell you ways in which they've contributed to the meaning of other people's utterances in the past.

Language a flow, not a reservoir

I want to think of *people* meaning things when they use words, rather than *words* meaning things, and rather than words as being a store, a reservoir, which you may label vocabulary and which you may then make deliberate steps to try and increase. I don't want ever to take deliberate steps to try to increase that reservoir. I want to get the flow going more vigorously, so that words are being used more and more vigorously and with more and more applications, drawing into their stream more and more words that haven't yet been there.

EVERTTS: It is easy to think about vocabulary in isolation, especially when we note the many studies in word counts. Our concern might rightly be with understanding words in context and expressing our thoughts to ourselves as well as to others. Those who are around preschool children are often amazed at their creative use of language. If a child does not have a word at his command, he quickly and easily uses a metaphor, for as Susanne Langer has suggested, we describe a new object or experience in terms of what we already know and thereby illustrate the creativeness of our use of language.

From the practical standpoint, possessing an ample speaking and listening vocabulary aids a young child in mastering the process of reading. I think that teachers as a whole in America are very much concerned with the development of the child, especially his ability to read. They look constantly for ways to hasten development of his linguistic abilities. The testing programs in most schools make teachers increasingly aware of achievement and rate of growth.

BRITTON: You know, we could look at children and say that at the age of nine, on the average, they'll be three-foot-seven; at the age of eleven, on the average, they'll be three-foot-nine. And then you can say, isn't there some way of helping them? I can see there are discrepancies between measuring linguistic skills and that kind of measurement but I think that the point still holds. I think looking at averages in this way simply takes our minds off the main job and makes us look at a different job.

I don't want teachers to say, "Look, this is the change from that grade to this. Can I not hasten it?" Life is long, and human beings have the longest infancy in the world. Economic conditions are making immaturity longer. I don't see the value of hastening development in this sense. I think we are missing another value, an evolutionary, a Darwinian value, that the fullest development at any stage of our progress is the first platform for the next stage. Unless you develop as fully as possible the child's use of language at the expressive stage, you will get a poverty-stricken operation at the referential stage.

Don't hasten growth

I suppose really the whole point is that this way of looking at things has the same origins as progressive education has in this country. It comes from

Dewey. It was added to a good deal in the times when perhaps progressive education was manifest in this country. It was added to a good deal in the times when perhaps progressive education had so bad a name in this country that people weren't paying attention to Vygotsky and Piaget. It had a good deal added to it on a foundation of Dewey but it comes from the same origins. This way of looking at things *is* new, I think, because it didn't fall afoul in England of what it did in America—a sort of socialization. American programs turned what was essentially sound philosophy from Dewey into life adjustment. This resulted in the charges that have been made so often that English teaching, language arts teaching, is a collection of random items.

EVERTTS: Many people have discovered that difficulties arose not from the philosophy of Dewey but from those who tried to interpret that philosophy.

Problems of curriculum guides

For quite some time now we have looked at children and thought about their educational needs and how we could plan the best possible program for them. As a result, all supervisors and most teachers who are deeply concerned with the English language arts at some time or other have been involved in the preparation, writing, or revision of curriculum guides. These may have any one of a dozen titles, but the basic design is the same. Objectives are defined and specific skills to be developed are identified. Activities or ways of realizing these are included, together with recommended texts and trade books. Though they recommend diversity to meet individual differences or stress flexibility, and encourage the teacher to explore new ways of teaching, the guides usually present a monolithic program. All too frequently the teacher has difficulty adapting the use of the guide to the state- or district-approved textbook, and he is not sure to what degree he can depart from either of these requirements in meeting the challenges in his own particular classroom. Since the teacher population as well as the student population is highly mobile, many administrators rely upon the curriculum guides to set the direction for instruction in the school district, especially if district-wide testing accompanies the program. Needless to say, many teachers feel that such testing programs make it imperative to follow the guides closely.

More recently here in America, financial support has been given by the federal and state governments for the creation of new programs to improve classroom practices. The Project English centers and the regional laboratories have created reams of new materials from which teachers and school districts can choose. The nature of the programs varies widely. Some are very free and adjustable while others are more structured; some are designed for the gifted, others, for the slow learner; some are more traditional, others, more innovative.

BRITTON: Why is it that anyone in this country who wants to help teachers

immediately leaps to the idea that he should write a curriculum? I am sure a lot of very good work has been done in this way, but it seems to me to be prolonging the life of something which for many of us has begun to be a skeleton in the cupboard. It's no longer a threatening monster; it's a skeleton in the cupboard. But I think it'll continue to rattle its bones to our discomfiture for quite a long time, until we face up to this basic point of what we mean by curriculum and whether in fact we need it.

I think the reason it rattles its bones is that whenever you turn to it you are going to be dealing with generalizations about children, generalizations about children in circumstances you don't know, so you're generalizing about the circumstances also. And on the whole, you're going to be setting down things that all children will be doing together in any group.

I think the first thing is to have teachers assess the situation they are in, and secondly, to decide that most of the time you are not having all the children doing the same thing at the same time. This is much more difficult than to think in terms of a curriculum.

Substitute for formal guides

If you want to be helpful to teachers, have long lists of things that have been done by teachers at different stages of progress, of ways in which individual work with children has been encouraged. A collection of the past experiences of teachers presented in a framework which suggests that these are only things that have worked, that these won't necessarily work in other situations, but they are suggestions to try. Now that doesn't get over the difficulty of having a teacher who simply isn't capable of knowing whether what he tries is successful or not.

Put teacher in position of pupils

I do think teachers should be placed into situations of learning for themselves at their level. Perhaps in the course of two or three days or a week they should go through the kinds of processes that we feel children ought to be going through. This can bring quite a quick change of attitude for teachers, who may then be able to go back into their classrooms and simply begin trying to find out for themselves what it is all about in terms of classroom practice.

EVERTTS: Do you think we should continue to emphasize "content" in the instructional classroom as stated in many curriculum guides?

BRITTON: Don't you think the difficulty comes in distinguishing "teaching" from "learning"? In other words when we say "content" we're thinking of teacher and how much the teacher knows—has, in fact, been taught. Whereas if you think of learning (and I'm with you, I want to think of learning) I don't know what content means.

EVERTTS: During the past few days, limitations of curriculum guides have

been discussed. How can greater freedom in planning and in classroom activities be realized without danger of either an authoritarian or *laissez faire* atmosphere?

BRITTON: When John Dixon says, "something less specific than a curriculum and more organized than chaos,"[1] does this make sense, or are we all saying to ourselves, "Oh, after all it's the curriculum we're going to have. We want it and we'll have it"? Would it affect what you did in the curriculum guide if you decided you didn't want the curriculum guide but you did want a *teaching* guide?

EVERTTS: If there were no curriculum guides, how might a teacher in the classroom organize his program to provide for a variety of learning experiences which will be especially valuable to his own pupils?

BRITTON: I suggest two things. One, not thinking of the curriculum but starting where you are now, starting with the kids you've got, opening eyes and ears to the situation you're actually in, learning a very great deal more about what individual life each child brings into the classroom, and observing what communal life or activities the group has set up and continued to set up. Receptiveness and openess to the immediate situation—a deliberate effort toward this—takes the place of a study of how to plan the work of the future. In other words, that's the essential starting point. This must be accompanied by the second element, a sense of direction. You've got to know in what direction you're moving.

Those two things seem to me to be what in practice turns something which may feel dangerously like chaos into something which is not nearly as ordered as a planned, sequential curriculum, but is very far from being chaos. If there is any planning to be done, it will be in terms of what kind of experience children of this kind, in this kind of situation, are *likely* to come up with, and that's simply preparatory to finding what in fact they do come up with, something which informs your sense of direction. In other words, you need first to look at the way your children listen to what you read to them, the kinds of things they choose to read themselves, the kinds of things they say. And then try and explain to yourself *why*.

For example, you get a sense that for some reason the children are interested in tramps, old men, grandmothers, or eccentrics. Then perhaps you penetrate through that to a tentative generalization that everybody, all the ordinary grownups, teachers, and mothers, fathers are all saying, "Conform, conform, conform. Do it like this, do it like this, do it like this." Therefore, anybody like a grandmother, and old tramp, or a nonconforming grownup is a tremendous relief

[1] John Dixon, *Growth through English* (London: Oxford University Press for the National Association for the Teaching of English, 1967), p. 91.

from the ordinary teacher, parent, grownup. And at times when the pressure of this conformity is strongest there will be a strong desire to explore in their secondary experience, in their reading and in their writing, the lives of tramps, old sailors, and old soldiers, eccentrics, and ones like that. This sort of wisdom is looking ahead, is getting a sense of direction, but it's getting it in terms of experience and not in terms of levels of skill.

EVERTTS: Your remarks indicate the sensitivity of the teacher is going to have a lot to do with classroom techniques. A teacher can misuse a perfectly good device or he can be sensitive enough and take what is basically a poor idea and know how far to go with it and where to cut it off. How can a teacher who is sensitive to the things children are interested in get them to write about these things? Can we say then that uniform assignments are not necessary or, indeed, should be avoided to get the members of a class actively involved in the writing process?

What about assignments?

BURROWS: Assignments aren't too necessary. After children have started writing and know that their products are respected because they are theirs, because they are honest, I have never had to give children topics to write about. On an occasion, children can choose whether they are going to write, whether they are going to dramatize, to paint, or whatever.

Rarely would I have more than half a dozen, ten, or twelve out of thirty or more, writing at any one time. All of a class doesn't have to write all at one time. Generally speaking it is more likely that only a portion of the class would write at a given time. I shouldn't say that I would never ask all of the children to write if they had something to say. When they have something important that matters to them, they will write it. They must know it will be welcome.

But at times I have asked children to try an experiment with some characters or with some kind of incident just to see if it would work. Indeed, I did this a couple of weeks ago with a group of children. I said that I was trying to find out something, and incidentally, I am still trying to find this out. I said I wondered whether they enjoyed writing about the kind of things that were most important to them when they wrote about characters. At another time four days later, I asked that same group to write about an incident, a moment of action, an episode kind of stimulant. They entered into the spirit of it as an experiment. I assured them that they would not have to rewrite; the papers were not going to be graded and I would type and give back to them their stories so that they could use them. It was communication.

If what the youngster has to write doesn't become a laborious piece of drudgery, but rather the writing is an opportunity for communication, the youngster can be in a situation where he can be proud of what he has written. I don't mean

that I will always do this for children, that everything that they write of an *imaginary* nature has to be put into permanent or semipermanent form, but when we are experimenting and I ask children to experiment (primarily because I want to learn something about them) I feel that I have an obligation to them. As a researcher I have to do something for them when they are doing something for me. Their writing is part of a cycle of communication. They realize that they are going to read some of their stories aloud, that they will have them right there publicized as it were. Once they get off dead center, momentum builds up. They write what matters to them. They very often choose characters that have been developed before. When pupils become involved in characters and want to write more about their characters, what matters to them comes out in the writing. So there is infinite variety. I have never had two children choose voluntarily to write precisely the same kind of story. I admit to children very honestly that they are writing for experimental purposes, but I ask them to write all at the same time about a given topic.

EVERTTS: Dr. Burrows, you have been talking about the researcher in the classroom, and now I am wondering about what the classroom teacher does in the classroom. Is there any potential danger in actually assigning topics in the elementary school? Since there seems to be a change in purpose of writing when children get to be eleven and twelve years old, let's consider writing in the elementary school. Are there any dangers in the kinds of assignments in which we say, "Write about this," or even give them three or four pictures and say, "Write a story about this," or use any other kind of external motivation?

Danger in assigning topics?

BRITTON: I don't really think this is an area in which I can say anything very helpful. I agree with Dr. Burrows and I think she said a lot which is helpful. I have a feeling that there is a sort of land mine buried in the question somewhere. When you have a particular reason for doing it you would do it, but it would be very restricting if you thought that was how most of the writing went on, because you would then be timing the writing according to your own program. "Everybody write now;" whereas most of the work arises naturally from what children are doing, arises when it arises and not when the teacher says so. So the real answer, I think, is only a reformulation of what Dr. Burrows said. You don't have to suggest topics once things get going, because *what is written arises from what is going on.* The answer here, I think, lies not in the assignment, but lies very much in individual children developing their own interests in the material that you have provided.

EVERTTS: What can be done to help teachers become acquainted with some of the procedures we have discussed here?

BRITTON: Obviously we can't change things overnight, but I think, for ourselves, we can start thinking in other terms. I'm thinking of something you said earlier about teachers being able to experience it themselves. Instead of doing curriculum guides and the materials to go with them, you might have conferences, even short ones, in which you get teachers together and then, in fact, write and go in for improvisation and drama and so forth. I do think even a short conference or series of conferences of that kind quite dramatically allows teachers to experience for themselves the nature of these activities and the nature of the social outcome of this kind of activity. In other words, a group of twenty or thirty teachers in which this is going on organize themselves into the kinds of groups in which it most helpfully goes on. In a writing group, for instance, their interest in others' writings becomes a natural part of what goes on. I've seen this happen in the course of a week, and I think it could happen in the course of less. I think undoubtedly teachers could go away having experienced for themselves even briefly the kind of thing that they—we—want their children to experience in their classroom. This seems to me to be a possibility.

Inservice teacher training

I remember hearing a speaker at one conference I attended say that it was his fervent hope that in twelve months' time his schedule of work, his curriculum, would be in every classroom in the state where he was working. He didn't see, and I think a lot of people in the audience didn't see, that this is a total negation of all we had been saying. In other words, if you really do think that you could work out ahead what ought to be done in every classroom—classrooms you don't know, you've never seen and you don't know anything about—you could work it all out from where you sit—well, this seems unrealistic to me.

EVERTTS: Changes in preschool education and the elementary and high school curricula at times seem slow in coming, but it is gratifying to realize that changes are taking place. It is equally gratifying to know that programs and lectures in these institutes have surely stimulated us all to make some changes in our school programs or curricula. These changes will not come about because of some outside influence or source. Indeed, they should not. They will take place because of what *you* are doing; *your* attitudes, *your* viewpoints, the way *you* put these ideas into effect—these will determine the real direction of change. What *you* demand and ask of others, of publishers, of authors, of lecturers, of scholars, can set the direction in which you would like to see education move.

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